EDINBURGH:
Printed by James Ballantyne and Co.

QUEENHOO-HALL,

A Romance:

AND

ANCIENT TIMES,

A DRAMA.

BY THE LATE
JOSEPH STRUTT,
AUTHOR OF "RURAL SPORTS AND PASTIMES OF THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND," &c.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

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THE history, of itself, which is partly fictitious, and partly founded upon real circumstances, admits of great variety of characters and incidents; sufficient, it is hoped, to render it abstractedly interesting: But the chief purpose of the work, is to make it the *medium* of conveying much useful-instruction, imperceptibly, to the minds of such readers as are disgusted at the dryness usually concomitant with the labours of the antiquary, and present to them a lively and

pleasing representation of the manners and amusements of our forefathers, under the form most likely to attract their notice.

The *scene* of the piece is laid in England; and the *time*, (in which the events are supposed to take place,) is in the reign of Henry the Sixth, about the middle of the fifteenth century. The *domestic manners*, &c. of the *English*, at that period, are very little known; though a thorough investigation of them is positively necessary, to link together, (if I may be allowed the expression,) those of the preceding, and those of the succeeding centuries. Hence this publication may be deemed generally useful; and especially to the lovers of old-English-poetry, which it will make much

more intelligible, in a variety of instances, by explaining many *obsolete customs*, frequently alluded to by the poets, and, above all, by the early dramatic writers of this country.

"The different degrees of the people, from the *nobleman* to the *peasant*, have their places in the romance; their characters are marked by their language and deportment; the speeches are, in general, sufficiently modernised, to make them perfectly intelligible; but, at the same time, they contain enough of the *phraseology* of the age, to give them an air of antiquity.

The sumptuous manner of living, which distinguished the nobility of this country in days of yore, the furniture of their mansions, the trains of domes-

tics, and retainers belonging to them, and the pomp they assumed upon occasions of solemnity, are contrasted with the more humble dwellings, decorations, and festivals, of persons less opulent, descending to the cottage of the rustic.

The various pursuits, and domestic amusements of all ranks of persons, form a part of the work; and especially, the exhibitions of the wandering *minstrels, jugglers, narrators of fables,* &c.; the nature of their *spectacles* are explained, from their most brilliant performances, to those adapted to the taste of the rustics in common drinking houses, with appropriate specimens of their poetry and tales.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE late Mr Joseph Strutt was well known to Connoisseurs by his "History of Engravers," and by his own performances as an artist. Among the last are many that evince his talents of design, as well as his skill in engraving. To literary men he was distinguished by his sedulous and honourable endeavours to illustrate the early history of his country. The "HORDA ANGEL CYNNAN," comprising an account of the dresses and costume used in England, during the various ages from the invasion of the Saxons to the last century, is a work not only of value to the antiquary, but to all who, reading the early history of

their country, are desirous to identify, with the events recorded, some idea of the external appearance of those by whom they were performed. "The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England," with the corresponding engravings, is a work of equal merit; and those who undervalue the labour and skill necessary to select the materials of such a composition, are little aware, how much more the fire of genius is kindled and excited by a single circumstance of minute and picturesque reality, than by an hundred elegant, round, and polished periods, in which events are generally narrated, without a tittle to mark whether they happened in Britain or Palestine.

But, independent of his merits as an excellent artist, and a sedulous antiquary, Mr Strutt possessed powers of imagination, of

which the following volumes are a satisfactory, though, necessarily, an imperfect specimen.

The romance, entitled "Queenhoo-Hall," was acquired by the Editor in an imperfect state; and although the tale is brought, by a literary friend, to a hasty conclusion, yet, from the materials which remain, there is reason to believe, that Mr Strutt intended it should neither be so abruptly, nor so inartificially terminated. Traces are to be discovered in the manuscript, of adventures sketched out but not finished, and of new characters to be illustrated in the future process of the story; but there remained not sufficient evidence of the path which the author intended to pursue; and, therefore, it was deemed more fitting to trust to the reader's liberal candour, for the disproportions natural in a story not

finished by the original author, than to make the memory of Mr Strutt responsible for the edifice built by another, when the foundations he had laid were scarcely to be traced. It is also to be noticed, that although the ancient dialect is observed with great accuracy (generally speaking) by the lower personages of the romance, yet the language and manners of the higher rank are not *gothicized,* if the reader will permit the expression, in the same proportion. Lord Boteler, his daughter, and visitors, talk nearly like people of rank in the present day, while their domestics use the language of the feudal ages. It seems probable, that the author intended, at his leisure, to harmonize these jarring parts of his picture, and that the present narrative only presents the outline and main plan of his building, without the gothic *façade,* which should

have given a character to the whole. The Editor, however, has not ventured to remedy this defect, because it could not have been done without re-writing a large portion of the work; because the tale is in itself interesting, and the reason of such slight inconsistencies obvious and irremediable; and, lastly, because perchance he found himself unequal to fill up the extensive plans which had been sketched by so excellent an antiquary as the deceased author.

The scene of this fictitious narrative is laid in the neighbourhood of Tewin in Hertfordshire, which was distinguished as the scene of many charitable and benevolent exertions of the worthy author. Many of the places described in the vicinity, would have received illustrations from his pen, and proba-

bly also from his pencil, had he lived to finish the task he had undertaken.

The talents of Mr Strutt as a poet, are evinced not only by many lyrical pieces scattered through these volumes, of which some may justly claim an uncommon share of applause, but by the drama entitled "Ancient Times," which, though perhaps hardly fitted for the stage, contains some passages of great poetical merit.

Upon the whole, it is hoped the public will be at once favourable and indulgent to the literary remains of one, to whom the ancient history of his country owes much; whose Editor may boldly claim for him the applause due to genius, and the debt owing to departed industry and worth.

LONDON, 1*st April*, 1808.

QUEENHOO-HALL;

A

LEGENDARY ROMANCE.

QUEENHOO-HALL;

BEING

A HISTORY OF TIMES PAST.

SECTION I.

DESCRIPTION OF A MAY-GAME, IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

"In good sooth, Gregory, you carry matters too far," said Thomas.

"Not in the least," answered Gregory. "Go to; I am not the ass you take me to be."

"That were a goodly jape indeed," retorted Thomas, "to take my lord's jester for

an ass: but shame upon you to be so set askance for a word or two."

"Word me no words," quoth Gregory; "I will not perform the hobby-horse; and if the hobby-horse be not performed, wot ye well, the morris will be stark naught;—let Gervas look to it; it comes of his knavery."—

"But you are so choleric," said Thomas.—

"Look you now," answered the Jester; "it is acknowledged on all hands, that no man can jerk the hobby, or rein him, or prance him, like me: I have played the horse with transcendant applause, before this cockerel broke his egg-shell. And shall I be told to my beard by such an howlet, that I know not how to use the bells? May the foul fiend take me, but it were a good deed done to break the hilts of my dagger over the knave's costard!"

"A fig for him," quoth Thomas; "you know he is an idle lozel; it is ever his guise to be prating like a magpie; heed him not:

for we have all agreed that you shall have the double bells, bought for my lord's own morris; we have provided the hobby a new snaffle; and Peter Lanaret has made an addition of colt's hair to his tail, which reaches to the ground."

"Say you so?" returned the Jester: "why then I will relent; I will play the hobby-horse. In sooth, it would have been a sorry trick to have spoiled the morris for want of the hobby; and especially, that it should have been spoiled by the operations of a silken lackey. Certes, you all know there is not one among you qualified to play the beast like me."

"You say true," answered Thomas; "you have always been excellent at playing the beast.—But see yonder, our comrades are all of them equipped in their disguisements. Away, for shame! or the morris will be ready before you are mounted."

"Never fear," said Gregory; "be but the

bells hung at the hobby's ears, and I will be on horseback before they have gone through half their postures."

This dialogue passed between Gregory the jester and Thomas the reve's son, in the court of Queenhoo-hall, at Tewin, in Hertfordshire; the residence of Lord Edward Boteler, a baron of great opulence in the reign of King Henry the Sixth, and a great favourite at the court of that unfortunate monarch.

It happened on the morning of the first of May, that, the family being absent, the household servitors had engaged with the villagers to join in the celebration of the May-games; and were now preparing to exhibit their pageant, by way of rehearsal, in the great hall, when a loud knocking at the gate announced the arrival of some person of consequence. There was not one of the servants, excepting Oswald the chamberlain, equipped in his proper habit; and he proceeded gravely to the gate, where, having

performed the office of the porter, he was greatly astonished by the appearance of the Lady Matilda, daughter of Lord Boteler, alighting from a litter, accompanied by her cousin the Lady Eleanor.—He had no time to give information to the motley tribe within; and the ladies, on entering the hall, were equally surprised at the sight of the pageantry.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Matilda, but not with anger; "Bless me! Oswald, what may all this mean?"

The chamberlain approached, and bowing very obsequiously, instead of answering the question, attempted to welcome them home. —"I hope," said he, "your ladyship is in health; and also the Lady Eleanor, your fair cousin.—You are welcome home; you come indeed rather unexpectedly.—Saint Thomas grant his lordship may be in perfect health! —Fye upon it; we are all unprepared for his reception!—Begone, you varlets, and make

you ready!—Is his lordship coming soon?—The knaves, I trow, have set all things at sixes and sevens."

"And on my part, I think the same," rejoined the lady with a smile; "but all is well, I hope?"

"Oh yes, your ladyship," answered the chamberlain, encouraged by her gentle manner of speaking; "All is well; all is excellently well."

"And wherefore," said she, "do I see this confusion in the hall?—the domestics are so fantastically habited, that, were not some of the faces familiar to me, I should have taken them for a troop of foreigners: I beseech you inform me what new livery it is they have taken on them to wear."—

Oswald bowed very low, and thus replied: "Your honour must know that this day is the first of the merry month of May: and the varlets have agreed,—not meaning the least harm, my lady, but simply for disport-sake,—

to join the villagers, who are about to erect a May-pole on the Green in the afternoon after the old guise: and the knaves, as you see, are equipped for the pageant."

"And nothing more than a May-game is preparing?" said Matilda.

"Nothing more, by my fay!" returned the chamberlain; "in good sooth, nothing more: but now the pageant is done.—Away, away, ye varlets! I weened it was an idle frolic!—uncase in an instant; and off with these lozel knackeries!—on with your proper vestments, and every one to his vocation!"—

"Be not so hasty, Oswald," said his mistress; "for I do not see any just cause why our arrival should deprive your comrades of any innocent amusement in which they may reasonably participate: and therefore I commission you to see that the sports go forward, and with additional splendour; for we, my dear Eleanor," continued she, addressing herself to her cousin, "if you have no objection,

will walk down to the Green, and see the ceremonies."

"I know not any thing," returned the Lady Eleanor, "in my present humour, that could please me better; I love to be merry myself, and am never more delighted than when I see all about me happy."

Matilda ordered the chamberlain to cause a pavilion to be erected on the Green for their reception; and then the ladies retired.

The unexpected arrival of the baron's daughter had occasioned the greatest consternation among the ringleaders of the pageant; they concluded that all their preparations had been made to no purpose, and, vexed by the disappointment, were returning to their respective duties with very gloomy countenances; but when it was known among them that their lovely young mistress not only permitted the exhibition of the sports, but proposed to honour their performance with her presence, the hall rang with acclamations of

joy; the pageant was rehearsed with great glee; and every heart was exhilarated by her condescension.

The Boteler family made a great figure in Hertfordshire. Lord Edward Boteler, as already noticed, was in high favour with his sovereign, and held a post of importance at court. Queenhoo-hall, the noble family-mansion, was situated about four miles from the town of Hertford; it was a spacious edifice; and large vestiges of it remain even to this day.

Lord Edward was young when he married; he had three children by his lady,—two sons and a daughter; the sons both died early in life; and his lordship was left a widower at the age of forty-five. His lovely daughter, at the fatal period that robbed

him of his wife, had just reached her eighteenth year: she was exceedingly beautiful, elegantly formed, and, above all, possessed a mind superior in excellencies to her external endowments. On the death of her mother, Lord Edward had made her the superintendant of his family; and this office she performed with such decorum, as acquired at once the respect and the love of the servants.

Well aware that it would be irksome for his daughter to be much alone, and fearful of exposing her to the boundless limits of the court, Lord Edward kept her much in retirement, but added to her enjoyment the company of a lively companion,—the only daughter of his deceased brother: her name was Eleanor; and the sprightliness of her disposition was well calculated to stimulate the mind of Matilda to cheerfulness, which of itself was too much inclined to gravity. These fair companions felt for each other a

pure sisterly affection; and as their dispositions, especially in points of love, were not precisely the same, there seemed to be none of those little jealousies prevalent in their minds, which are usually destructive of domestic happiness.

It chanced that the king, in the spring of the year, removed his court from London to Saint Albans; and as Lord Edward, by virtue of his office at court, accompanied his royal master, he had sent for his daughter and niece to meet him there. On their arrival, the ladies were introduced to the queen; and their reception was such as gave great satisfaction to Lord Edward. The lustre of the court grew on Eleanor's mind; and the adoration of the courtiers was a sort of homage that she found herself highly gratified in indulging. Matilda, on the contrary, was by no means satisfied with the inflated adulation of the court; she had sense enough to conceive that she was not an angel; and,

amidst the blaze of splendour, sighed for the tranquillity of retirement.

A tournament had been proposed, and great preparations made for the display of the pompous pageant, when an irruption of the Scots in the north of England postponed the show; and the king immediately set off from Saint Albans, in order to collect forces sufficient to repel the invaders. The queen retired to London; and Lord Edward, who still accompanied his majesty, sent his daughter and her cousin home to the family mansion at Tewin, with an attendant.—How affairs stood at Queenhoo-hall when the ladies arrived, has already been shewn.

Dinner was ordered early; and when it was over, the ladies were informed that all things were in readiness for their reception on the Green.

When the ladies reached the pavilion, they were welcomed with loud shouts by the rustics, who were assembled in crowds to see the May-games; and soon after their arrival, they were joined by the young Baron Fitz-allen of Marden, together with Fitzosborne of Digswell and his two sisters, who came to see the sports; and, having heard the ladies were returned to Tewin, and meant to be present at the pastime, took the opportunity of paying their respects to them. These were followed by several other gentlemen and ladies from the adjacent villages; who were all of them received with the greatest politeness by the Lady Matilda, and her fair cousin; and when the company were seated, the sports began.

In the front of the pavilion, a large square was staked out, and fenced with ropes, to prevent the crowd from pressing upon the performers, and interrupting the diversion; there were also two bars at the bottom of the

inclosure, through which the actors might pass and repass, as occasion required.

Six young men first entered the square, clothed in jerkins of leather, with axes upon their shoulders like woodmen, and their heads bound with large garlands of ivy-leaves intertwined with sprigs of hawthorn. Then followed,

Six young maidens of the village, dressed in blue kirtles, with garlands of primroses on their heads, leading a fine sleek cow, decorated with ribbons of various colours interspersed with flowers; and the horns of the animal were tipped with gold. These were succeeded by

Six foresters, equipped in green tunics, with hoods and hosen of the same colour; each of them carried a bugle-horn attached to a baldrick of silk; which he sounded as he passed the barrier. After them, came

Peter Lanaret, the baron's chief falconer, who personified Robin Hood; he was attired

in a bright grass-green tunic, fringed with gold; his hood and his hosen were parti-coloured, blue and white; he had a large garland of rose-buds on his head, a bow bent in his hand, a sheaf of arrows at his girdle, and a bugle horn depending from a baldrick of light blue tarantine, embroidered with silver; he had also a sword and a dagger, the hilts of both being richly embossed with gold.

Fabian a page, as Little John, walked at his right hand; and Cecil Cellerman the butler, as Will Stukeley, at his left. These, with ten others of the jolly outlaw's attendants who followed, were habited in green garments, bearing their bows bent in their hands, and their arrows in their girdles. Then came

Two maidens, in orange-coloured kirtles with white courtpies, strewing flowers; followed immediately by

The maid Marian, elegantly habited in

a watchet-coloured tunic reaching to the ground; over which she wore a white linen rochet with loose sleeves, fringed with silver, and very neatly plaited; her girdle was of silver baudekin, fastened with a double bow on the left side; her long flaxen hair was divided into many ringlets, and flowed upon her shoulders; the top part of her head was covered with a net-work cawl of gold, upon which was placed a garland of silver, ornamented with blue violets. She was supported by

Two bride-maidens, in sky-coloured rochets girt with crimson girdles, wearing garlands upon their heads, of blue and white violets. After them, came

Four other females in green courtpies, and garlands of violets and cowslips: Then

Sampson the smith, as Friar Tuck, carrying a huge quarter-staff on his shoulder; and Morris the mole-taker, who represented Much the miller's son, having a long pole with an

inflated bladder attached to one end: And after them

The MAY-POLE, drawn by eight fine oxen, decorated with scarfs, ribbons, and flowers of divers colours; and the tips of their horns were embellished with gold. The rear was closed by

The hobby horse and the dragon.

When the May-pole was drawn into the square, the foresters sounded their horns, and the populace expressed their pleasure by shouting incessantly until it reached the place assigned for its elevation:—and during the time the ground was preparing for its reception, the barriers of the bottom of the inclosure were opened for the villagers to approach, and adorn it with ribbons, garlands, and flowers, as their inclination prompted them.

The pole being sufficiently onerated with finery, the square was cleared from such as had no part to perform in the pageant; and then it was elevated amidst the reiterated ac-

clamations of the spectators. The woodmen and the milk-maidens danced around it according to the rustic fashion; the measure was played by Peretto Cheverette, the baron's chief minstrel, on the bagpipes, accompanied with the pipe and tabour, performed by one of his associates. When the dance was finished, Gregory the jester, who, as we have observed already, undertook to play the hobby-horse, came forward with his appropriate equipment, and, frisking up and down the square without restriction, imitated the galloping, curvetting, ambling, trotting, and other paces of a horse, to the infinite satisfaction of the lower classes of the spectators. He was followed by Peter Parker, the baron's ranger, who personated a dragon, hissing, yelling, and shaking his wings with wonderful ingenuity; and to complete the mirth, Morris, in the character of Much, having small bells attached to his knees and elbows, capered here and there between the

two monsters in the form of a dance; and as often as he came near to the sides of the inclosure, he cast slily a handful of meal into the faces of the gaping rustics, or rapped them about their heads with the bladder tied at the end of his pole. In the mean time, Sampson, representing Friar Tuck, walked with much gravity around the square, and occasionally let fall his heavy staff upon the toes of such of the crowd as he thought were approaching more forward than they ought to do; and if the sufferers cried out from the sense of the pain, he addressed them in a solemn tone of voice, advising them to count their beads, say a paternoster or two, and to beware of purgatory. These vagaries were highly palatable to the populace, who announced their delight by repeated plaudits and loud bursts of laughter; for this reason they were continued for a considerable length of time: but Gregory, beginning at last to faulter in his paces, ordered the dragon to fall

back: the well-nurtured beast, being out of breath, readily obeyed, and their two companions followed their example; which concluded this part of the pastime.

Then Thomas the reve's son, in the habit of a pilgrim, came to the front of the pavilion, where he was met by a party of the young men and maidens belonging to the procession; and the following dialogue, composed for the purpose by Peretto the minstrel, was sung; and he accompanied the voices with his harp:—

PALMER. To the Women.
Fair damsels, say what brings you here?

DAMSELS.
To celebrate the first of May.

PALMER.
Wherefore this day to you so dear?

DAMSELS.
It is bold ROBIN's wedding day.

CHORUS.
With sprightly dance and carols gay,
We welcome ROBIN's wedding-day.

PALMER. To the Men.
Why stand the bowmen on a row?—
MEN.
Prepar'd to play a skilful game.—
PALMER.
Some Saint to honour 'tis I trow:—
MEN.
'Tis ROBIN HOOD, for that's his name.
CHORUS.
With sprightly dance, and carols gay,
We keep bold ROBIN's wedding-day.
PALMER.
But who is she so fair, bedight
In tunic blue and rochet white?
WOMAN.
Dost thou not know her, holy man?
It is the blithe maid MARIAN.
PALMER.
How name ye him y'clad in green,
With party hose and fringes sheen?
MAN.
It is the prince of archers good:
And he is hight bold ROBIN HOOD.
CHORUS.
With merry carol, dance, and play,
We welcome ROBIN's wedding-day.
PALMER.
I am a stranger, well ye wot,
And much have travell'd:—I have seen
The Lord's sepulchre, and the grot
Where he was born of maiden clean.

The shells of Cales, in sign of grace,
  Adorn my hat;—and you may spy
A vernicle, with His dear face
  Impress'd, who died on Calvary.

Upon my cloak Saint Peter's keys
  Were drawn at Rome, with crosses wide:
And reliques from beyond the seas
  I bear, or woe may me betide!

The snow-topp'd hills of Armony,
  Where Nöe's ark may now be found,
I've seen;—in sooth, I do not lie;—
  Told o'er my beads, and kiss'd the ground.

At Walsingham my vows I've paid;
  At Waltham eke, and Coloraine;
And to Saint Thomas I have pray'd,
  Who near the holy rood was slain.

But tell me to what saint, I pray,
  What martyr, or what angel bright,
Is dedicate this holy day,
  That brings you here so gaily dight?—

This calendar I've search'd with care
  For saints y'bless'd and angels good;
The holy saints are named there,
  But no such saint as ROBIN HOOD.

MEN.

Dost thou not, simple Palmer, know—
What ev'ry child can tell thee here,—
Nor saint nor angel claims this show,
But the bright season of the year?

WOMEN.

The cowslips now adorn the dells;
On sunny banks primroses blow,
With violets sweet and dainty bells;
And on the green the daisies grow:

The birds in warbling chorus sing
In hedge and grove and shady wood,
Inviting us to hail the spring,
And join the troop of ROBIN HOOD.

CHORUS.

With merry carol, dance, and play,
We welcome ROBIN'S wedding-day.

When the dialogue was concluded, the archers set up a target at the lower part of the Green, and made trial of their skill in a regular succession. Robin Hood and Will Stukeley excelled their comrades; and both of them lodged an arrow in the centre circle of gold, so near to each other that the difference could not readily be decided, which occasioned them to shoot again; when Robin

struck the gold a second time, and Stukeley's arrow was affixed upon the edge of it. Robin was therefore adjudged the conqueror; and the prize of honour, a garland of laurel embellished with variegated ribbons, was put upon his head; and to Stukeley was given a garland of ivy, because he was the second best performer in that contest.

The pageant was finished with the archery; and the procession began to move away, to make room for the villagers, who afterwards assembled in the square, and amused themselves by dancing round the May-pole in promiscuous companies, according to the ancient custom.

When the inclosure was nearly cleared, and the populace were preparing to take possession of it for the exhibition of their tumultuous gambols, the attention of the whole

assemblage was suddenly diverted to the lower part of the Green, where a loud shouting was made, and a crowd of people appeared hastening towards the pavilion. Every one appeared to be surprised, because there was no addition to the pageantry expected; and all were anxious to know what farther pastimes were to be exhibited. The baron's fair daughter, turning to the chamberlain, who stood behind her, said, with a smile, "I thought the May-games were concluded."

"By our holy-dam, my lady," said Oswald, bowing, "I weened they were: but, I trow, the varlets have contrived some new knackeries."

While he was speaking, six men entered the square, uncouthly habited in short tunics of parti-coloured say, having long yellow hose fastened to their jerkins, with blue and red points; their mantles were skins of wild beasts, with the fur outwards; and their heads were covered with great garlands of counterfeit

oaken leaves: every one of them bore a large knotted club upon his shoulder, and had a ram's horn suspended at his side by a thong of leather. These were followed by two pages, habited in blue, and wearing garlands of ivy: one of them carried a huge quarter-staff; and the other, a tablet, on which was depicted the portraiture of a beautiful female fantastically habited. Immediately after them came a tall, stout man, in a mummery disguisement, resembling a savage; his body and limbs were covered with long hair; his face was hidden by an unseemly vizor, to which was attached a large blue beard; and his head was overwhelmed with a garland of oak and ivy leaves entwined together.

This gigantic figure stalked round the inclosure, holding in his right hand a beautiful chaplet of goldsmith's work, enriched with pearls; which he shewed to the crowd as he passed.—When he came to the front of the pavilion, he hung it up in the presence of the

company there assembled, and with a deep, hoarse voice, addressed them in the following terms:

"Be it known to all;—This peerless chaplet belongs to the Sovereign of the May; and I am her champion.—If you ask me who this lady is, I answer, *The most excellent princess the Lady* TRIAMORE, *Queen of Fairy Land, and the paragon of beauty.*—She has sent by me this faint resemblance of her person, that all who see it may confess her charms." So saying, he took the tablet from the page, and shewed it to the assembly; he afterwards hung it up beneath the chaplet; and casting his gauntlet on the ground, turned to the populace, and resumed his speech:

"In the name of the Lady Triamore, I here propose three separate trials of strength and skill, and challenge three of the stoutest and boldest men in this large circle to practise man to man with me.—If I be foiled, the victor shall claim this costly chaplet for his

meed, to be by him bestowed on the fairest dame present: but if I be the conqueror, (as no doubt I shall,) the vanquished man shall own himself my lady's slave, and, humbly kneeling upon his knees, kiss the ground be fore her picture."

His companions then put their horns to their mouths, and sounded them three times. The mob answered them with their shouts; and when silence was restored, the savage resumed his speech:—

"With the first man who meets me, I will try a fall at wrestling: and I rede my antagonist, that he be strong and seasoned in the art, or he may rue his rashness.

"Let the second bring with him his quarter-staff upon his shoulder, and take good heed I do not crack his crown, and make him trail it.

"With the third, I will make trial to wrest the staff from him, or draw him over the line."

He then commanded his attendants to wind their horns again three times; and between the soundings he called aloud for some one to come forward: but no man answered the challenge.—

"I weened it would be so," cried he, stalking disdainfully backwards and forwards in the front of the pavilion; "There is not a wight among them hardy enough to stand the gripe with me:—and, by the majesty of Fairy Land, they are the wiser; for ill he sleeps, who sleeps with broken bones."

"This swaggering blade, for all his flouncing, is but a swash-buckler, in my estimation," said Fitzosborne.

"He is at best, as you see, a perfect savage," returned Fitzallen.—

"I hope, however," interposed the Lady Eleanor, smiling, "some doughty champion will bring him to his daring-do, and clip his plumes before he leaves us."

"Certainly such a champion will come

anon, my lady," returned Fitzallen: "Justice to the fair sex, and especially to the Lady Matilda and yourself, requires the savage to be punished."

Eleanor received the compliment with a smile, but was silent.

In the mean time, the baron's domestics had assembled round Morris the mole-taker, who was esteemed the best wrestler at Tewin, being withal a man of great strength and courage; and they prevailed on him to enter the lists against the overgrown braggadocio: and Sampson the smith, by way of encouragement, promised, if he proved unsuccessful, to have a bout with him at quarter-staff.—When it was made known to the populace, that Morris had accepted the challenge, they testified their joy by shouting, and casting their caps and bonnets into the air. Peretto with his fellow minstrels, to give the greater solemnity to the contest, brought their champion to the place of trial with

martial music, and sang a stanza from one of the songs of Rowland, to inspire them with valour. Morris entered the lists with an air of intrepidity, and, throwing off his super-tunic, would no further divest himself on account of the ladies.

The assailants met each other; and, both having made sure of their gripe, the wrestling began. Morris exhibited much skill in counteracting the offers of his antagonist, and kept him at bay; for more than once he seemed to have him at advantage, but the savage as constantly recovered his position; when, observing that Morris became more eager in his attacks from these temporary flashes of success, he threw a temptation into his way; the unfortunate mole-catcher fell into the snare; when the savage, by a sudden shift of his standing, brought one of his legs beneath the other's hams, and threw him to the ground with such violence, that the blood started from his mouth and nostrils; so that

he was taken away sore bruised and speechless from the field: the adoration of the picture did not take place on account of the inability of the foiled hero to perform it.

Sampson, seeing how roughly his companion had been handled, repented that he had undertaken to succeed him; recollecting, however, that he could not forbear the contest without injuring his honour, and exposing himself to the ridicule of his companions, he determined to try his fortune; when, casting off the friar's cowl and gown, he appeared in a doublet of fustian, laced in the front with thongs of leather. The minstrels brought him forward with music and singing, as they had done the mole-taker; and he passed the front of the pavilion, bearing his quarter-staff upon his shoulder.

The savage man, seeing him approach, took his staff from the page who stood near him; and, poising it upon the thumb of his right hand elevated above his head, twirled it

round like the sails of a mill; when, tossing it aloft, he caught it in its fall, and, thrusting one end to the ground, he surveyed his antagonist with an air of contempt; saying drily to his companions: "If this cockerel cannot carry his staff more couthly, he had better trail it behind him, and, by giving up the contest, save a knave's sconce."—

To which sarcasm Sampson angrily replied; "By the soul of Saint Dunstan, I am not awaped, though the moor-cock crow so loudly! An' you take not good heed, goodman bell-swaggerer, I will crack a fool's costard before May-day be done."

The combat commenced; when much dexterity was manifested on both sides, and many sharp blows were given and received: but Sampson's comrades perceived from the beginning, that the savage had the advantage of him, and manifestly possessed not only superior strength, but superior skill: however, they used every endeavour to encourage him,

by their shouting and outcries. The savage, having struck him with much violence upon the left side, tossed his staff into the air, and, catching it by the middle as it fell, to the great surprise of the spectators, flung it round before the other could recover himself, and struck him upon the head. The blow was decisive; for Sampson fell to the ground, covered with blood, and nearly deprived of his senses. His comrades flocked around him; and having washed the wound, and bound it up with a scarf, he recovered sufficiently to own himself conquered; and the savage insisted on his paying homage to the picture; which the crest-fallen smith was obliged, by the law of combats, to perform.

The savage, rejoicing in his double success, began to deride the spectators; saying, "Ye may remember, a third trial of prowess remains unachieved; and well I ween, the disgrace that two of your champions have met with will afford but small encouragement for

a third to risk his credit." He then commanded his men to wind their horns to the challenge, but no one appeared to answer it; they sounded again and again, but without effect.—

"I heard," said he, "that a bold outlaw, hight Robin Hood, held his revels here this day. I wist to meet him at this stound; but, by the soul of my grand-dame, the jolly robber is not present;—the knave has sent, I ween, some puleing wench, in man's aguisement, to supply his place, and wends himself elsewhere."

The crowd now turned their eyes upon Peter Lanaret the falconer, in expectance that he would have undertaken to chastise the boaster's insolence; but Peter, who was by no means equal in strength to Morris or Sampson, very prudently declined the contest. In fact, there was not one of the company who chose to come forward on the occasion.

The savage man, having uttered many taunting gibes and reproaches to no purpose, walked towards the pavilion, to take down the chaplet and the picture; when a clownish kind of man, in a loose tunic, with long traces of coarse borrel, came into the lists; he had a thrum bonnet on his head, with a cock's feather stuck in the top of it; and his face was concealed by a mask. The oddity of his appearance, and the rusticity of his deportment, excited the laughter of the spectators; which he not heeding, sternly commanded the savage not to remove the chaplet; saying, "Hold your hand, goodman savage, and let the garland be:—I stood at this stound, weening some one more prow would hest ye; stint your prating. Sihence the swains have been adawed by your big bason looks, and wend aloof, I deem it unfit you should claim the guerdon without the achievement."

The appearance of the champion did not promise much sport to the spectators: how-

ever, they applauded his courage, and wished him success. The appellant surveyed him with great contempt, and threatened, after he had drawn him over the line, to bestow a good cudgelling upon him, as the best means of teaching him his proper place.

This menace exasperated the rustic; who seized the savage, and shook him violently, exclaiming, at the same time, "Tongue-doughty lozel, make siker your own footing, or I may catch you at default."—The savage was angry at being attacked in such an unusual manner, and, the moment he had extricated himself from the gripe of the clown, caught up his staff to strike him: but the general voice of the people commanded him to forbear; and they began to entertain a more favourable opinion of the defendant's abilities.

A long crease was then cut upon the ground between the two assailants; and each, grasping an end of a quarter-staff, pushed and

tugged with all his might, to gain it to himself, or pull his antagonist over the mark. This contest continued much longer than any of the former, and was maintained with great vigour on both sides. The parties exhibited unusual skill, and alternately commanded the applause of the spectators. Victory, however, at last declared for the rustic, who, by an extraordinary exertion, drew the savage over the crease, threw him to the ground, and deprived him of his staff; when, setting his foot upon his breast, he elevated the weapon, saying, "Certes, Mister Scarebabe, you been in poor plight to apay me the blows you dempt my due, and may well forsay such deed.—Perdie, the award is mine to send you to the leech with a broken rib or two for him to mend; but your evil stower abates my avengement.—Algates I aread you, withouten let, to wend in humble guise to yon gay arbour, and recant your selcouth leasings, craving forgiveness from the fair dames who

are seated there.—That done, get back to your native darkness, and take your queen with you; she shews herself by moonlight, as best becomes her: but the beauty of this country courts the day, and is heightened by the splendour of the sun."

"If my ears deceive me not," said Fitz-osborne, in a whisper to the Lady Eleanor, "this borrel churl has changed his note on a sudden, and talks in the style of a polished gallant."

The lady replied, "He not only speaks well, but he has deported himself well, by silencing that ill-nurtured braggart, and supporting the honour of our sex."

The savage performed the task imposed on him by the conqueror: he recanted his errors upon his knees; and, having obtained pardon from the ladies, he took down the tablet, and departed with his companions, stalking down the Green amidst the tauntings and mockeries of the populace.

When the savage man was gone, the victor cast the quarter-staff upon the ground, and, drawing forth a bugle-horn which had been concealed beneath his tunic, he blew it skilfully, and the challenge was answered by the sound of trumpets from the upper part of the Green; when a party of horsemen appeared, preceded by two heralds arrayed in rich tabards embroidered with silver and gold. As soon as this gay train had reached the borders of the inclosure, the rustic, kneeling upon one knee, addressed himself to the Lady Matilda, entreating her permission, and the permission of the other ladies in the assembly, for him and his comrades to run three courses at the ring in honour of the fair sex: and this gallant petition was readily granted.

"Do you not think, my dear cousin," said the Lady Eleanor, addressing herself to the baron's daughter, "that this same stranger is the best-nurtured man for a borrel-dressing clown, that ever you saw?"

"I trust," returned Matilda with a smile, "the borrel husk, when cast, will produce a fair grain."

The heralds first entered the lists bare-headed; and sounding their trumpets, they were followed by five knights apparelled in tilting habits; their hose and their doublets were of light blue velvet, branched with gold; their surcoats of silver baudekin, and their mantles of scarlet tyratine, fringed with gold; their bonnets of striped satin, edged with pearls; and their faces were covered with comely masks, adorned with long beards of gold wire. Behind them appeared six esquires, bare-headed, and in one livery of blue velvet, with mantles of orange tawney satin. The knights and the esquires were well mounted upon caparisoned horses; and the sixth esquire led a horse without the rider. They saluted the company as they passed the front of the pavilion, and when the horse unoccupied was brought up to the

pretended rustic, he cast aside his tunic and traces of borrel, and presented himself to the spectators in a rich habit, resembling those of the other five knights, saving only that his was more splendid, and upon the breast of the surcoat was wrought, in goldsmith's work, the cognizance of the Boteler family; and beneath it, a heart transfixed with an arrow, embroidered with crimson thread, surrounded with this motto, in letters of gold; TRUE TO HER I LOVE. He leaped into the saddle with great agility, and kept his seat with so much ease and elegance, that he excited the astonishment of the men, and the commendation of the ladies. Every one was curious to learn his name; but no one could satisfy the inquiries of his companion. The Lady Matilda, particularly, was much surprised at seeing her family cognizance upon the surcoat of the stranger; for she was well assured, he and his companions were not her father's domestics; and she beckoned to the

chamberlain, to learn from him the inten tion of the pageant. The old man, shrugging up his shoulders, assured her he was altogether in the dark: "for certes," quoth he, "our knaves areed me these chevisaunces are no part of their May-game gambols."

"This is passing strange," said the Lady Eleanor.

"Not at all, my lady," returned Fitzallen; "for beauty is never without its adorers."

Eleanor smiled at the young baron's remark; but Matilda blushed, and assumed an air of great seriousness.

In the mean time, the heralds had dismounted, and prepared the lists for the performance about to take place.—A long thick rope was stretched across the square, supported by stakes driven into the ground, and placed parallel to the front of the pavilion: at one end of the rope, a strong pole, about four yards high, was erected, and from it was suspended the ring, or small circle of brass;

two small springs were affixed to the top of this ring, which, being pressed together, were thrust into a brazen socket, and retained there by the exertion of the springs, but so as to give way when the point of the lance was thrust through the ring, and permit it to be drawn out without risk of damaging the socket, or breaking the spear.

When these matters were perfectly adjusted, the six knights took the field, and every one receiving his lance from his respective esquire, ran in rotation singly at the ring; and the Knight of the Wounded Heart took his turn the last.

The first course was very brilliantly performed; for five knights bore away the ring, and the sixth struck it on the edge.

In the second course, the first knight's horse stumbled, and threw his rider, who received no hurt; but, according to the law of the pastime, he lost his turn. Of the other

five, three struck the ring, and two carried it away.

In the third course, the ring was struck by two, and two bore it from the socket; the other two were altogether unsuccessful.

The heralds, whose office it was to register the success of all the candidates, declared that the victory was not decided, but lay between the Knight of the Wounded Heart and the fourth knight; for both of them had carried the ring three times: and in such cases, the laws of the sport required, those who had been equally fortunate, to obtain permission from the ladies, and perform three additional courses. The consent of the ladies was obtained, and the courses achieved. The fourth knight struck the ring twice, and carried it once; the Knight of the Wounded Heart struck it once, and carried it twice; and of course the victory was decreed to him. The heralds reserving the determination of the prize of honour (a garland of ivy inter-

twined with laurel) to the ladies, the garland was put into the hands of the Lady Matilda, who, with the joint approbation of her female companions, adjudged it to their champion, who, leaping from his horse, was conducted by the heralds, sounding their trumpets, to the baron's daughter; and, kneeling before her, he received from her fair hands the honourable prize. He then commanded the heralds to take down the chaplet which the savage man had hung up in the front of the pavilion, and, presenting the same to the Lady Matilda, he said, "Fair Excellence, permit me, your unworthy but devoted champion, to solicit your acceptance of this chaplet; and humbly I intreat you to wear it in your own right, as the Sovereign Lady of the May."—The young lady blushed, and was exceedingly confused at this unexpected address: she took the chaplet in her hand, unconscious of what she was doing, and the knight withdrew before she could return it;

but, perceiving that his esquire had taken his horse from the lists, and that the barriers were stopped by his companions, who were passing through them, he leaped over the rope, without the least hesitation, to the great admiration of the gaping populace, and, mounting his horse, rejoined the train; and they rode away full speed together, not affording the least opportunity for the company to discover who they were, or whence they came.

The baron's fair daughter looked on in silence; the suddenness of the transaction greatly surprised her, and the adventure appeared like a vision. The greater part of the company, supposing that the whole of the pastime had been contrived by the baron's servants in honour of their young mistress, could not conceive why she should be so much affected by the conclusion; and some of them attempted to rally her on the success of her champion.

"Indeed," said she, endeavouring to resume her usual cheerfulness, "I know not to whom I am indebted for the flattering compliments that have been paid to me on this occasion: I am sensible I do not deserve them;—they are, however, like the gaudy tinsel of this bauble, fair only while new, but soon fade away, and prove their own worthlessness."

"If the compliments, my dear cousin, be equally valuable with the chaplet," retorted the Lady Eleanor, taking it at the same time into her hand, "you have greatly under-rated them; for I am much deceived if this tinsel, as you call it, be not pure gold, and the embellishments true pearls and oriental diamonds.—I never saw more exquisite workmanship than is displayed in the foliage, nor more elegancy of design than appears in the disposition and intertwining of the branches. Indeed, my dear Matilda, this garland is a jewel of price, and worth the acceptance of

the queen. For my part," added she, affecting to sigh, "I wish her Majesty of Fairy-land would send another savage with another chaplet, and Good-Fortune another knight to win them for me."

To this, the baron's daughter gravely replied: "There shall not need, my dearest cousin, another savage nor another knight, on this occasion; for if you be pleased with this gaudy ornament, you will oblige me by your acceptance of it from me; and I beseech you to wear it for my sake."

"Not for the wealth of Fairy-land," replied the Lady Eleanor hastily: "this jewel belongs to the Lady of the May; you are elected Lady of the May by the fair ordeal of a combat, and you only ought to wear it."

The observations made on the chaplet induced the company, who were near at hand, to examine it more minutely, and all of them agreed with the Lady Eleanor respecting its beauty and its worth.—"It would become

you well," said that lady to her cousin; "permit me, I pray you, to place it upon your head."—This Matilda positively refused, until it became the general request of the company that she would comply with the accustomed ceremony, which had at least the sanction of ancient usage in its favour, though contrary to her own inclination; and she at length gave way to the solicitations of her companions, and submitted to the inauguration.

When the golden chaplet was adjusted to her forehead, the populace shouted; and, at that instant, an old man, with a long white beard, who had entered the inclosure with the train of the champion, and seated himself unnoticed at the right hand of the pavilion, rose up, and, casting from him a large hyke which had concealed his under dress, discovered himself to be a minstrel. He then produced his harp, and performed a prélude very skilfully:—the attention of the people was excited by the music, and they were silent; when he

sang the following verses with much melody, and accompanied his voice with the notes of the instrument:—

SONG.

From hill, from dell, or lucid spring,
  Meändring through the flow'r-dight glade,
Where elves at midnight dance the ring;—
  Or from the deepest woodland shade;—
Thee I invoke,—thine be the hallow'd lay,—
Sweet Harmony,—To praise the QUEEN OF MAY!

'Wake with enchanting sounds the lyre;
  Celestial music then shall flow:
Strike the full chord with soul-felt fire,
  And bid the raptur'd bosom glow:
'Tis Beauty, peerless Beauty, claims the lay;—
See where she sits,—The SOV'REIGN OF THE MAY!

Whate'er romantic fancy traced,
  Warm from the heart, in Beauty's praise,
With energetic wildness graced
  By bards of lore in ancient days,
Remember now,—and tune the magic lay,—
To greet the lovely SOV'REIGN OF THE MAY.

In Pagan land bright Beauty reigns,
  And claims a worship there divine;
Th' unnurtur'd savage wears her chains,
  And bows devoted to her shrine;

Wide o'er the world is spread her sov'reign sway:—
Hail, Beauty!—hail, fair LADY OF THE MAY!

Yet Beauty is a fading flow'r,
And oft untimely disappears;—
Subject to change from hour to hour,
It cannot bide the test of years;
But constant virtue blossoms ev'ry day
In thy chaste bosom, SOV'REIGN OF THE MAY!

Virtue shall shine, the child of Truth,
To ceaseless ages, fair and free,
And claim eternity of youth,
When Time himself must cease to be:—
Let Virtue, and let Beauty, rule the day;
For both are thine,—MATILDA,—QUEEN OF MAY!

The old man, having finished the song, arose from his seat amidst the plaudits of his auditors; when, bowing to the baron's lovely daughter, he retired hastily through the crowd, and, mounting a horse stationed for him near at hand, he rode away without soliciting any reward, as minstrels were accustomed to do. This new event heightened the surprise of the Lady Matilda; and she took her cousin by the hand, saying, "I beseech you, my

dearest Eleanor, let us return to Queenhoo-hall; for here we seem in truth to be in fairy land, where wonders multiply upon wonders: I am not, however, disposed at present to witness any more of them."

The Lady Eleanor readily acquiesced with the request of her cousin; and, having taken their leave of the company assembled in the pavilion, the two young ladies retired from the Green, preceded by the chamberlain, and followed by a large train of servitors. The pavilion was soon afterwards cleared by the departure of the gentry; and the whole of the inclosure was given up to the rustics, for the performance of their wonted pastimes; but, as it was drawing towards evening, the dancing round the May-pole was shortened. Such of the villagers as had been actors in the first pageant, together with the hand-bell ringers, went up to Queenhoo-hall, where a mummery was to be exhibited; and others, who came from a distance, returned home.

The ladies reached Queenhoo-hall without any interruption; but the whole of their discourse was engrossed by the extraordinary adventures of the day. They canvassed over and over the several circumstances relative to the combat;—they called to memory the names of all the young noblemen of their acquaintance, without being able to fix upon any one of them, to whom they could, with the least degree of certainty, attribute this effusion of gallantry.

The supper was served up, and removed again in a short time; the ladies had not either of them any great inclination to partake of it; and the baron's fair daughter was exceedingly thoughtful: when Gregory the jester, being ushered into the room by the chamberlain, bowed obsequiously three or

four times, and addressed the ladies in a set speech, composed by himself, with the assistance of Gilbert the schoolmaster, to this effect:—

"Most illustrious and most incomparable ladies, transcendent paragons of beauty, and superlative patterns of virtue and nobleness; Be it known unto your honours, that the varlets of the village, and your own egregious knaves, have prepared for your graces' amusement a dance and a mummery, as aforetime it hath been customary to set forth in honour of the May: and I, your honours' most unworthy gentleman and most humble servant, am delegated, in the name of our company, to parley for them, and to solicit your august ladyships to shine upon our poor performances, and illuminate our rustic show by the lively emanations of the radiant beams from your bright countenances.—So shall we hold ourselves bounden to pray for the welfare and solace of your excellencies for ever."

—"And *amen*, good Gregory," said the Lady Eleanor; "I wonder you forgot that."

"I could not forget it, my lady," replied the Jester, "because I did not learn it; and I did not learn it, because it was not penned down in my speech; but, if your honour thinks it proper, I will repeat the oration, and add the *amen* with all my heart."

"You shall not give yourself that trouble on my account," said Eleanor; "and I dare venture to say, your lady my cousin is perfectly satisfied. But, most illustrious Gregory, in your incomparable harangue, you tell us that mumming at May-tide is agreeable to ancient custom: on the contrary, it appears to me this sport has no sanction from prescription, excepting it be holden at the festival of our Lord's nativity, and the holidays subsequent, and, when properly conducted, is under the direction of the Lord of Misrule, or the Twelfth-night King of the Bean."

"This misweening, my lady," quoth Gregory, "arises from lack of conning in antick usages; but, had I one well skilled in such leer to hold debate with me, I would, by craft of rhetoric, confront him by such provings as he might not gainsay."

"And whom can we find," said the Lady Eleanor, "more fitting to handle such an argument than the chamberlain, who, in the absence of the seneschal, is master of the ceremonies, and well acquainted with precedents?"

"Gramercy, my lady," returned the Jester, "you will stint the debate at a word, if your choice shall fall upon Oswald; for he, I trow, is well avised, and cannot gainsay me."

"Hasty conclusions, friend Gregory," said the chamberlain, "are often false;—and such is that you have made at this stound; for, certes, I agree with the Lady Eleanor."—

"Why then," quoth the Jester, "I will gage my new-gilt bauble against your satin

cap and feather, (and the odds, you wot well, are largely in your favour,) that I will proven you devoid of advisement in antick glee-games; and their ladyships shall award the mastery."

"I shall not stoop at this time to take up the gauntlet," said the chamberlain gravely; "for, certes, I am not in the humour for fooling."

"Pardie, that is a selcouth saying," retorted the Jester, "and not well worthy of credence. I beseech you twirl this bauble as I do: it will then be said you have played the fool once in your lifetime, and sithence I will proven that you have overdone me at my own craft."

"That conclusion is it least paradoxical," said the Lady Eleanor.—

"Not a whit, my lady," quoth the Jester; "and I areed you to note the answer.—It is said he plays the fool but once in his lifetime; and well ye may wot, that once signi-

fies all the time he has lived, or that he is a fool by nature:—my occupation requires me to play the fool, and ye say I often do so; by this ye may understand I have some vacations from folly."

"It is shrewdly answered," said the lady.

"The knave," quoth Oswald, "shoots at random; but he shoots often, and, paravaunt, unwittingly may strike the mark."

"The toad has spit its venom without noyance," answered the Jester; "and if your pannikel, Sir Gravity, were set for a mark, I would 'vise you to beware of a second bolt I am about to discharge.—And now, my lady, permit me to say a word or two on the disport of mumming:—And first, we may learn that a mummer is a person in disguisement, or one who personates another;—as thus, when his lordship's minstrels and playmen set forth their moralities, and enterlodes, they are in disguisements,—some like kings, some like great barons, some like ladies, some like

angels, some like devils, and some like wild beasts; and what are these but mummers? Now ye wot well, these enterlodes are performed on divers occasions, and at divers times, as at Easter, and at Whitsuntide, and other great festivals and merry-makings.—And to-day, saw you not many mummers, such as jolly Robin and his bold outlaws, one of them in semblance of a miller, another in guise of a friar, myself as a hobby-horse, and Peter Parker like a dragon?—Those disguisements belong to the May-day pageant, and require the May-pole, and the May-pole requires them,—and are the disport of olden times; for May-poles, I warrant, were set up in Paynim days:—and ancient saws set forth, that King Arthur, so famous for his doughty deeds, took upon him the part of Robin Hood; and his valiant comrades, the Knights of the Round Table, became mummers to dance about the May-pole. Sithence, I trow,

ye may conclude that mumming on May-day is of right antick usage."

"Bating a trifling anachronism relating to the celebrated British hero, you have, friend Gregory," said the Lady Eleanor, "well supported your argument;"—and, taking the baron's fair daughter by the hand, she thus addressed herself to her: "Come, my dear Matilda, now it has been proved that we shall be acting in consonance with the customs of our ancestors, let us, I pray you, walk into the hall."

The Lady Matilda sought to excuse herself, declaring that she was fatigued already, and had not the least relish for any addition to the pastimes. The Lady Eleanor would not admit of any excuse:—"You are growing," said she, "more grave than usual, and giving way to melancholy. I promoted the argument which Gregory has so sagely discussed, to make you smile, but without effect; besides, you must go, or the perform-

ers will be most cruelly disappointed, who ardently expect to be honoured by your presence."

"I cannot deny you any thing," returned the lady with a smile; "but in truth I was never less disposed for merriment than at this moment."

So saying, she permitted her cousin to lead her into the hall, preceded by the chamberlain, who ceremoniously conducted them to their places. They were followed by Gregory, who, quaintly aping the state assumed by the chamberlain, afforded great amusement to the spectators. When the ladies were seated, six young men, clothed in light orange-coloured tunics, guarded upon the sleeves with blue ribbons, appeared, bare-headed; and every one of them held a hand-bell in each hand. They came into the middle of the hall, and rang a variety of changes; and the performance was much commended by the

ladies. At the conclusion of the peal, this song was sung to the music of the bells:—

When full in prime the pulse is strong,
And wanton youth hails mirth and song;
Cares avaunt, and fears alarming!—
Joy abounds, with pleasures charming.

Chorus, with the bells.

How sweetly then the changes ring,
With heigh down, ho down, ding dong ding.

But when bright youth shall fade away,
And age transmew the black locks grey;—
When tott'ring steps the staff demand,
And palsies shake the head and hand;
The sprightly changes cease to ring,
With heigh down, ho down, ding dong ding.

The carol blithe and dancing gay
No longer claim the holiday;
But time a doleful story tells,
The bell-rope breaks, and cracks the bells;—
The bells that did so cheerly ring,
With heigh down, ho down, ding dong ding.

The deep-ton'd tenour tolls the knell,—
A summons for departure home;
Of life it is the curfew-bell,
And heavily it sounds, Boam!—Boam!—
One, one dull bell no change can ring,
With heigh down, ho down, ding dong ding

"This song, my dear Matilda," said the Lady Eleanor, "is the work of a knavish kind of poet: the beginning was so cheerful, that I was almost inclined to rise and dance a measure; but the close is so dismal, that positively it makes me melancholy."

Before the baron's fair daughter could return an answer, the ringers struck up again; and, bowing to the ladies, retreated to the bottom of the hall, where they imitated the falling of the bells, and then withdrew.

They were succeeded by twelve damsels, habited in white plaited rochets, with girdles of Coventry blue; and their heads were adorned with garlands of primroses, intermixed with cowslips. After they had danced a short time, they were joined by a like number of young men dressed in green tunics, resembling foresters, every one of them having a bugle-horn suspended from his left shoulder by a baldric of silver tissue; their hose were of watchet-coloured fustian, and

their caps were of crimson taffety, ornamented with peacocks' feathers.

At a certain period of the dance, they sounded their horns, and suddenly there appeared, at the bottom of the hall, six uncomely figures, in the form of lions, tygers, and bears:—the women seemed to be frightened, and, as the mummers approached, drew up six in a company on either side of the ladies; and three of the men, drawing their daggers, stood on the one side, and a second three on the other side, as though it were to protect them from danger; at the same time, the remaining six foresters, drawing also their daggers, attacked the beasts; and every man, having overcome the animal he fought with, cast him upon the ground, and ripping open the disguisements, they were all uncased, and six pages, in their proper habits, arose, and joined the dance. The music was performed by Peretto the minstrel, with his associates; and, the dance being concluded,

the dancers formed themselves into two rows, and between them Robin Hood and his companions passed in procession, as they had done on the Green.—And so ended the celebration of the May-games.

SECTION II.

A SCENE AT A COUNTRY ALEHOUSE.

THE reader may well suppose, that the surprising adventures that took place at the celebration of the May-games, and the splendid victory achieved by the unknown champion, occasioned much conversation, and gave rise to various conjectures among the different ranks of spectators:—this was really the case. Among the ladies, some thought him of low degree, and said the baron's daughter affected prudery, in order to conceal her attachment to him; others considered his conduct as an effusion of youthful gallantry; others laughed, and whispered one to another, as though they knew more of the secret than the rest of the

company; and others, again, who saw more beauty in their mirrors than in the countenance of the Lady Matilda, thought he had manifested much deficiency of discernment by the preference he had given to her. Many of the old dames of the village, who accredited the stories of witches and hobgoblins, took the whole of the adventure for an illusion of the foul fiend; others said, the stranger was the wandering fairy Robin Goodfellow, or some such merry sprite, and that all his attendants were elves or goblins;—these good souls retired from the Green, crossing themselves, and counting their beads with great devotion, saying a paternoster or an ave-mary or two, and carefully conning over their night-spell, as the best preservative against the danger of enchantment, and to prevent their being goblin-led. But, though no one knew who the champion was, yet the men in general applauded his courage, and the females agreed in praising his figure, his

activeness, and the gentility of his deportment.

Shortly after the conclusion of the May-day pastimes, when the evening was set in, certain of the inferior spectators, as Hugh the carrier, Pierce the potter, Wat Coulter the ploughman, and some others of their merry companions who loved the ale-can, agreed to go to Hob Filcher's, at the Crown, on the Lower Green;—"where," says Hugh, "these stranger folk stopped in their way; and I will wager a cross, or two if occasion requires, that Hob knows more of the matter than any of us. So be we make him mellow with his own ale, he will tell us all for the guerdon."—This said, away they went; and thither, with the reader's permission, we will follow them.

Our jovial company, being come to the Crown, found Robin Tosspot the butcher's man, Jack the basket-maker of Wellwyn,

and some other lusty drinkers, already assembled there; and in the midst of the room sat Bernard the blind bagpiper of Hartford, who was playing a fit of music; and when he had done, Gillys the juggler started up and said, "By the bones, my masters, but if you would see a sight well worth the guerdon, I am the man who can quit you.—Would you see any legerdemain or cleanly conveyance, called by the learned clerks *deceptio visûs;* because, my masters, if your eyes are not as quick as my hands, I shall put the changeling upon you.—There," added he, throwing a crab-apple upon the table, "what call you that, I prithee?"

"Out upon thee for a lozel!" said Tosspot; "dost think we be such seely lobs as not to know a crab?"

"To be sure; why not?" replied the juggler; "wiser men than you have been deceived.—Look ye, my masters, all fair play, and above board,—I will shew you, for a

tester, more craft, and as cleanly cast, as John Rikell the king's tregetour will for two angels of gold.—You see, I cover this crab with this cup of latten; and you," addressing himself to Tosspot, "clap your hand upon it, and hold it down, for fear the apple should be gone."—Robin readily obeyed, looking slily at his comrades; and the juggler continued his harangue:—"Hark-ye, my masters, if my familiar deceive me not, I will send this poor John a-nutting on holy-rood day to meet the foul fiend."

"Ay marry," cried Robin, "you talk main well, master juggler; but I ben't to be cousened so easily as you think for."

"Certainly not," said Gillys;—"for here is the crab, my masters," holding it up in the sight of the company:

"Then let the sot
Uncover the pot,
And see what a dainty fine apple he's got."

"For all your bantering," said Robin, "I have another crab under the cup, I trow:"—but, raising it from the table, there appeared, to the great astonishment of the spectators, in place of the apple, a young howlet.

"I thought how it would be, my masters," quoth the juggler; "Birds of a feather flock together:—and the woodcock is fairly springed."

Robin looked very foolish, and his comrades burst into a roar of laughter;—the owl, being frightened by the noise, flew from the table, and perched upon one of the shelves.

"You shall now see," said Gillys, "that I can readily bring my hawk to the lure;"—when, imitating the hooting of an owl, the bird flew down to him, and he put it into a pouch which hung by his side. The clowns were wonderfully delighted with this performance; but Tib the innkeeper's wife, believing the owl to be in reality an evil spirit,

counted her beads, and crossed herself for security's sake.

"And now, my good masters," continued the juggler, clapping a box upon the table, "I have here a jack-in-the-box, the greatest curiosity ever seen in this or any other country.—This wonderful motion has travelled farther than Noah's ark.—It was exhibited, with unspeakable applause, to Mahound, Soldan of Constantinople, when he dined with the Emperor Sigismund, at the palace of the Seneschal of Nineveh, where the Dolphin of France tilted with the Prince of Fess for the fair Sabrina, daughter to the Queen of Bohemia. The King of Spain preferred it to all the tricks set forth by ten select companies of minstrels. All the crowned heads in Europe speak highly of its merit; and our own gracious Sovereign was so delighted with it, that he commanded me to play it over five times, and gave ten marks for my reward; and his excellency the Protector, Humphrey

Duke of Gloucester, gave me two angels of gold from his own private purse."

So saying, he handed his bonnet round among the rustics, to collect their donations; but, finding they did not communicate very liberally, he added; "Maister John Rikell, the king's tregetour, offered me fifty pounds in gold, and a place next to himself in his company, for this admirable motion; but I warrant ye, my masters, I refused him, and would have refused him had he offered twice as much; for the whole world cannot produce its fellow. Why should you, then, by withholding a few pence, deprive yourselves of a sight you never may have another opportunity of seeing?"

He then put his bonnet about a second time; and when he had collected all the money together that he could, he opened the box, and produced the puppet, dressed like a Moorish lady. Bernard played a tune appropriated to the purpose upon the jug-

gler's vielle, and Gillys caused the figure to perform all the motions of a dance in such a manner as surprised his spectators, who expressed their satisfaction by reiterated applauses. The performance being ended, the juggler and his companion were preparing to depart, when Hugh the carrier, having collected three-pence more, called for a song. Gillys took the money; and, playing himself upon the vielle, was accompanied by Bernard upon the bagpipes; and, after a short prelude, he sang the following verses:

SONG.

Fill to the brim this lusty can
With double ale and stout;
The wight I deem not half a man
Who dare not see it out.

Chorus.

Heigh ho, the ale so brown:
Fill it here,—fill it there:
Every one shall have his share.

The burley knight is sick, they say;
The friar's ill at ease;

The serving-man is drunk to-day;
And all have one disease.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

Then, if the men who wear the hood
No sin in drinking find,
Let's hold, such practice must be good,
And leave no drop behind.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

But give the churl a winding-sheet,
Who from his drink will fly:—
Let him, the hungry worms to treat,
In yonder church-yard lie.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

And o'er his carcase cast a stone,
To keep the niggard there:
He well deserves to lie alone,
Who poisons joy with care.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

But lightly may the green sod lie
O'er us, with daisies dight,
When death shall drain our last bowl dry,
And bid us say, Good night!
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

And, fellow-topers, when the wake
Or church-ale calls you nigh,
O'er us libations largely make,
To greet us merrily.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

What, though with linen shroud y-bound,
And on our cold bed laid,
Our sprites may hail the welcome sound,
And own the duty paid.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown;
Fill it here,—fill it there:
Every one shall have his share.

"By Saint Runyan," cried Robin, "I would not give a stewed pruin for such another song! it is as long as a vesper, and as dull as a homily: as I am a true man, it smells of Lent, when Sir John the curate talks of penance, and ends as molloncholly as a dirge. Go to, I'll sing you a song, my masters."

"Ay marry, that's another matter," said the host; "why, Robin, you be a very dragon at a song;—your voice is so loud, it will frighten the howlets;—it would make a rare second to the roaring of Grim the miller's water-fall."

"The fool's bolt is shot, I trow," answered Robin; "look you to your tankard, good-

man gorbelly: this ilk song, you may ween, was sung in the enderloot-play at Saint Mary's church by one of the merry wags with a blue beard, who thrust the three barns into the fiery oven. Allen our parish-clerk penned it down, and I gave him a stoop of strong ale to con it from him. It has a burden; and you mun all bear a part with me, or it will be stark naught.—Judge now fairly, my masters:—

SONG.

Bring hither ale—both stout and stale,
  Nor let me stinted be;
I never think—but how to drink;
  And drinking should be free.
Chorus.
    Then trowl the bowl:
    Wæsheal to every thirsty soul.

The merry sprite—who walks by night,
  Good Fellow, well you know,
Was once a man,—true to his cann,
  Like us, my hearts, I trow.
    Then trowl the bowl, &c.

But when the clay—he'd wash'd away,
That once his body fram'd;
All light was he,—and full of glee,
Hobgoblin justly nam'd.
Then trowl the bowl, &c.

Come, drink away—both night and day;
Let not our throats be dry:
And so shall we—transformed be
To elves, and never die.
Then trowl the bowl:
Wæsheal to every thirsty soul.

"By the blood," cried Hob Filcher, "but it is well done! Robin's song for my money. Give's your hand, my heart: you and I are stanch back and edge: we shall make rare elves, and bask all night upon the warm hearth by the glowing embers of the Christmas log, and, when we fling away at the crowing of the cock, drop a cross of silver into the shoe of the cleanly house-wench: but, by the lord of Lincoln, we will soundly catterclaw the idle queans who leave us a dirty house to range in." The juggler, find-

ing that there was no chance of drawing any more coin from the company, wished them good-night, and departed with his companion towards Hertford.

After they were gone, the can went merrily round; and Hob the inn-keeper, who had drunk pretty freely, began to reel; when Hugh, clapping him upon the shoulder, said, "Come, my jolly host, sing us your favourite song,

"Here is a pot of nappy good ale,
As clear as crystal, neat and stale."

"A fig for the favourite," quoth Hob; "give me a stoop of clary; that is my favourite."

"In good time," returned Hugh; "but let us have the song first."

"Say no more about it," cried Hob; for I am as hoarse as a cuckoo in June: and, by the blood, I will not sing for the best king's son in Christendom: but an it be for drink-

ing, my hearts, body of me, you shall not find my peer in ten parishes."

"That's a goodly jape in sooth," quoth Hugh; "do we not all know that Tosspot can fight you at that weapon, and baffle ye by odds?"

"By the blood, thou art a false knave to say so," answered the host: "am I not the imp's master? did I not first instruct him in the mysteries of the ale-pot, and teach him to turn off his bowl with good discretion?"

"Truce with your bickering," cried Robin; —"Hob is talking of my nonage, when I was a puelling boy, and wore a chin unfledged; but, by the lord of Lincoln, if he dare cast the gauntlet now, I am his man.—Look you, my masters, if he provoke me to my daring-do, I will empty his cellars before the prime bell rings, and marr his occupation for two moons to come!"

"Marry come up," quoth Hob, "the bandog bays most furiously; but he has lost his

teeth, my hearts: an I had the lozel foot to foot till cock-crowing, I'd make him stare worse than the juggler did after his howlet." This sarcasm produced a general laugh, and Robin made no reply.

The conversation afterwards turned upon the May-game, and Hob Filcher declared, that it wanted many knackeries to be complete; "For George the pinner of Wakefield," said he, "was not there, nor Bettris his leman, nor Will Scarlet the jolly Shropshire man. When I was a boy we had another guess May-game: I have laughed till I cracked my sides to see Robin Hood break the potter boy's pipkins, and fight with the potter."

"That strain," said Jack of Wellwyn, "is in the enterloot, and I warrant me was rarely enacted by the play folk at Saint Albans. But what say you, Hob, to the savage man, who so mawled poor Morris the mole-taker, and knocked Sampson over the sconce with

as little ruth as thof he'd been in the smithy, and smiting at the anvil; what mister wight was he?"

"Body o' me," returned the host, "he is a lusty revelour, I warrant me, with his merry-men all in a row. They called here anon before the fight, and eat and drank like roysters; and when the reckoning was conned, the jolly savage thrust into my hand a noble more than the costs. He weaned I did not know him; but, by the bones, I kenned him right well: for I noted him when he doffed his ugly visor to drink; but I was as mute as a fish—you know my guise—and wean ye well, my hearts, he is no elfin wight, but a roaring blade. He wonnes not in Goblin-land, but in the land of abundance—in the king's own house I trow. Why, do ye think that I should forget my former playmate, Jaques Duseday."

"Duseday!" cried Jack of Wellwyn with

surprise. "What, Duseday the famous prize-fighter?"

"The same," answered Hob, "and none other, or I am a knave, my hearts."

"He you mean," quoth Jack, "who turneyed at chop and foyne with sharp brands against Mudge the cudgel-player, before the king at Saint Albans."

"He is no changeling, I tell you," said the host.

"By the lord of Lincoln," continued Jack, "I am nought astouned that Morris fared so foully; and our comrade, Sampson, may well bid his beads for escaping with a broken coxcomb. Why this fire-drake is master-man in the company of jugglers belonging to John Rikell, the king's tregetour; he is the scare-crow of the country. By the rood, I marvel hugely who this same borrel beetle, trans-mewed into a silken butterfly, might be, that stinted the juggler's boasting, and made his

big bones cry twang ho; how hight ye him, mine host?"

To this Hob replied, "I ween, my hearts, he was the foul fiend benemped Belzebub. He came, I trow, from Sathan's paradise, and I hope he is gone to purgatory."

"By the lord of Lincoln," cried Jack, "you have said sooth for the nonce. He must have been the devil or Friar Rush, to have yshent the juggler so reproachfully."

"That same borrel knight," said Hugh, "benemp him how ye may, was a tall man and a brave"——

"He a tall man!" cried Hob; "the foul fiend afray him, he is a carle, a princox.—I'll tell ye, my hearts, this tall man, with his gay train as crank as peacocks, passed my doors without giving me the good-day, or hansling a single cross with me for luck's sake."

"Marry, that was a shrewd ill guise of

his," cried Tosspot; "for I hold no wight stalworth and true who passes a taverner's bush without tasting his wine. He is a knave, in my liking, who cannot trowl his bowl orderly, or refuses the wæsheal when the pot is thrust towards him."

"By the blood, my jolly heart," quoth Hob, "we be both of one mind. Look at Jaques Duseday, he is a man at all points: he never refuses to pledge his fellow: he smacks his lips like a lusty blood after a deep draught, and calls out amain,—let us have no stinting, my masters. I warrant I lost six or eight marks by his downfall. I looked for him back again; but he coured away like a fox from the hounds, or we should have been merry as grigs, and the ale and the clary had flowed as from a fountain."

By this time the clowns began to find their heads well stored with the fumes of the liquor; and Hugh the carrier, whose business required his attendance early in the morning,

rose up, saying, "I ween, my masters, we shall learn no more at this tide respecting the borrel knight; he is an arrant stranger to us all"——

"And so let him be," quoth Robin, interrupting him; "I care not he be an elf, a ghost, or the man o' the moon; he will not, I trow, put one cross into my pouch, nor set a bowl of clary upon the table.—Come, hostess, fill the can; we'll take t'other bout, and let the right sow claim her own pig for me."

"I'll have no more," retorted Hugh; "the night wears apace, and I must be off for London by the prime."

"And as I live," said Jack of Wellwyn, "my brains are in a maze; the world turns round like a whirligig, as the stronomers sayen, and if I tarry much longer, I shall peradventure walk wide of the path, and roll into the gravel pit in Lochly warren."

"I guessed how 'twould be," exclaimed Robin pettishly; "it is ever your guise when

you get into the marrow of good fellowship, to slink off like cravens, and leave me in the lurch.—What, you will go? then the foul fiend take you to fool's purgatory.—Here is Hob Filcher and I, we never flinch.—Come, dame, bring me a crab from the fire, and we'll see the bottom of this can before cock crowing; and then I'll crawl home as merry as a cricket."

The reckoning being paid, the company departed, singing as they went, excepting Robin, who, with his friend Hob, were seated in the chimney corner with a full can of ale before them; and Tit the innkeeper's wife fell fast asleep in the great chair.

SECTION III.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE LADIES.—A MORNING WALK.—AN ADVENTURE.

When the mummery and dancing were concluded, the baron's fair daughter withdrew to her chamber, accompanied by her lovely cousin; who assisted her in removing the chaplet from her head.—"I have hardly seen it," said she, taking it into her hands: and when she had carefully reviewed it, she expressed her surprise at the richness and elegancy of the ornaments; and added, "Indeed I have been to blame for giving encouragement to these May-games; this adventure, of course, will become the common talk of the village. Ignorance may give origin

to many misrepresentations of the fact, and malevolence take the advantage to interpose its unmerited censures."

"To none, my dearest cousin," returned the Lady Eleanor, "that can cast the least blemish upon your character; and therefore, I beseech you, be not in the least uneasy upon that account. The world, with all its petulance, is not unreasonable enough to blame you for the fault, if fault there be, of your unknown lover."

"Lover!" retorted the Lady Matilda; "fye, fye!"

"Not in the least," answered her cousin; "for every one will naturally believe the chevalier's own declaration; he professed publicly his adoration; he overcame the savage for your sake; he laid the reward of his achievement at your feet, and hailed you the Sovereign of the May. In my mind now, my dear Matilda, this unknown wooer, for such I hold him to be, has deported himself

like a puissant and an accomplished hero; being desperately in love, as a true knight ought to be, and as debonair as though Sir Tristrem, the flower of courtesy, had been his tutor."

"Your merriment, my good cousin, is altogether untimely; I do not wish to hear any more of this jack-a-lantern."

The serious manner in which the Lady Matilda expressed herself, joined with the oddness of the concluding phrase, made her cousin laugh; and, with an air of pleasantry, she replied, "You do the champion wrong, my fair lady, to confound him with a mischievous goblin. I am much deceived if he be not made with flesh and blood like other men; and peradventure he is the heir apparent of some great king or mighty emperor; so, through his persevering spirit, the daughter of Lord Boteler may become a queen or an empress. It will, however, be positively necessary, according to the esta-

blished rules of chivalry, for the dear unknown prince to take you away by stealth, in the dead of the night, from Queenhoo-hall,—marry you at Bramfield oratory; and, notwithstanding all the enquiries made after you by the baron your father, and all the outcries I of course must make upon the occasion, you and your august consort, after escaping ten thousand imminent dangers, shall reach the capital of his vast dominions, at a time when all the world give him over for lost, and his venerable father is erecting a cenotaph to his memory. The grey-headed old man will die suddenly for joy at seeing his son returned; the prince and you will deluge the earth with tears for the loss of such an excellent parent; and the next day your joint coronation will take place, with every due solemnity; when tournaments and justs will be exhibited upon the happy occasion—the bells ringing—bonfires blazing—cresset lights streaming—conduits running wine—

and the populace rejoicing; with such pomp and such pageantry as never was seen before:—and will not all this, my dear Matilda, be mightily fine?"

"And mightily consistent withal," returned the Lady Matilda.

"It is very unreasonable in you," said Eleanor, "to expect consistency in a romance. The very essence of legendary chivalry is to exceed the bounds of congruity; for if an author permits his hero to eat, to drink, to sleep, or to perform any of the functions of life like a reasonable being, he degrades his romance to a common history, and his hero to a common man. Every thing in romance must be wild, imaginary, and unnatural: a true knight will live twenty years at a stretch in a dark dungeon, with no other food than rats and mice, and without sleeping; but, when he takes it into his head to exert his strength, for wonderment sake, he will burst his adamantine chains asunder, beat down

the prison door with his fist, beat out the jailor's brains with one of the bars, and kill a thousand or two of Pagan kempery men, who are appointed to guard him, and then walk off in triumph, as sleek and as fresh coloured as Cecil his lordship's butler. The heathen daughter of the Soldan of Persia, who chances to be passing by at the time, falls instantly in love with this puissant hero, turns Christian to oblige him, and follows him through the world, leaving her aged father to curse his false gods, tear his milk-white hair, and break his hard heart with sorrow for her departure. And trust me, my dearest cousin, when you shall become an heroine, as the prospect before you seems to promise, all things will wear a different aspect in your eyes; cottages will be changed into palaces—palaces into enchanted castles—the possessors into giants—their wives and their daughters into ladies in distress—their servants into dwarfs—their dogs into dragons—and their hawks into

griffins. And when your puissant consort shall think it requisite, for no possible reason that I can divine but to reconvince you of his prowess, to leave his peaceful dominions, and seek abroad for perilous adventures, how delightful will it be for you, riding upon a stately palfrey by his side, or mounted behind him, so be it please you better so to travel, as the old ditty has it—

Over bog, over mire,
Through bush, and through briar,
And gloomy forests far astray,
Where never hapless knight,
By day-tide nor by night,
Explor'd the dark and devious way.

I, alas! have no such splendid fortune falling to my lot! No champion, prow and full of hardyhood, to become my protector, and lead me through the wide world, killing of two-headed giants—or flying serpents—or fiery dragons—or putting to flight whole hosts of fearful hobgoblins—and all for my amusement!"

" If these sarcastic effusions of your gaiety, my dearest cousin, afford you pleasure, go on with them," said the Lady Matilda; " but, for my part, I do not find the least amusement in them Indeed, my mind is ill at ease; and the more I reflect upon the untoward occurrences of the day, the more my thoughts are bewildered, and my anxiety increased."—She paused for a moment; when, taking her cousin by the hand, she, heaving an involuntary sigh, added; " I sincerely wish I had borne no part in them;—but it is now approaching apace to midnight, and if you please, my cousin, we will go to our beds."—The Lady Eleanor readily complied with her proposal, hoping that rest would be more conducive to the removal of the lady's disquietude, than the continuation of her railleries.

The next day the Lady Matilda arose at an early hour; she had slept but little, her mind being agitated by the events of the preceding afternoon. Perceiving the morning to be exceedingly serene and beautiful, she called to her cousin, who slept in an apartment which communicated with her own, and desired to know if a walk before breakfast would be agreeable.—"The sky," said she, "is unclouded; the little birds are singing in the thickets; and every thing that is charming in rural retirement invites us abroad."

"With all my heart," replied the Lady Eleanor; "it is indeed a delightful morning, and I have been awake some time listening to the notes of a thrush that is carolling in the garden, not far removed from my window."

When they were prepared for their excursion, the baron's fair daughter proposed a visit to the Park Lodge.—" I put," says she, " a mantle of sendal into the hands of the ranger's daughters when I left Tewin, in order that it might be embroidered by them ; I do not indeed suppose they can have completed the work by this time, but I am desirous of seeing what progress has been made : the border, my dear cousin, consists of a running sprig, embellished with foliage and flowers, and the pattern was designed and drawn by myself."

" I know," returned the Lady Eleanor, " you draw very finely ; and as I have never seen this pattern, I will readily accompany you thither."

" You are a flatterer, my cousin, and greatly over-rate my poor abilities," said Matilda, blushing : " the design has nothing uncommon to recommend it ; but you shall see it with all its faults." So saying, they

proceeded to Parker the ranger's habitation.

Upon their arrival, the Lady Matilda was much surprised to find the embroidery upon the mantle not only completed, but the work was executed in a manner superior to the young women's usual performances. The Lady Eleanor declared, that she knew not which deserved the greatest praise, the elegancy of the pattern, or the excellency of the needle-work.—"This diligence ought to be rewarded," said the baron's fair daughter. And putting her hand into a gipsire hanging from her girdle, she drew out an angel of gold, which she presented to the eldest girl, desiring her to share it with her sisters.

"Certes," quoth the damsel, courtseying as she received the money, "this guerdon exceeds our poor deservings; the work, so please your ladyships, you deem so quaintly wrought, is purfled by one more couthful at the needle than we be."

"And who is this excellent work-woman?" returned the lady.

"She is a stranger," answered the girl.— When Dame Alice, her mother, interfering, said, "And such a stranger—may our holy Lady protect her! she looks like an angel sheen. Certes, excepting yourself and the Lady Eleanor, I have not seen her peregal; nor shall I see it in twenty parishes, I trow."

"You much astonish me," replied the Lady Matilda; "inform me, I beseech you, who she is, and how she became your guest."

Dame Alice resumed her speech with these words: "I remember well, upon the vigil of Saint Thomas the blessed martyr of Kent, Sir John our curate arreaded us, that evil hap betides the best of folks; sithence the holy saints have had their tines and their tosts, and we ought not to be abashed by selcouth fortune; albe, it is a shrewd evil stour when so charming a rose-bud, so gent

a damozel, so noble a lady, is buffeted at hoodman-blind by a naughty world."

"You call her a lady, and tell us she is noble," said the baron's fair daughter, interrupting the old woman: "hence, I presume, she claims the privileges of rank and ancestry."

"And soothlich to sayen," rejoined Dame Alice, "they are her due, and with them large estates; but right is oft impeached by might, and so the poor chicken is pilled of its barley." At this instant, the sound of a lute was heard.—"She is going to carol," continued the good dame; "her window is open, and your ladyships may hear her better in the porch." The young ladies went thither; and after a short prelude, the stranger sang the following verses to a very plaintive tune:—

To thee, O soul-possessing power,
Sad Melancholy, shall belong
The thoughts that fill each wakeful hour,
And day by day my hopeless song.

But why—when unawares I close
These eyelids, overpress'd with grief,—
Am I a stranger to repose,
And find not in my sleep relief?

For then terrific visions rise;
On precipices steep I stand;
And, falling, cast around my eyes
For help,—but find no helping hand.

In wild affright, perchance I hear,
Arous'd from sleep, the midnight bell:—
With horror chill'd, I drop a tear,
And cry,—It is my Henry's knell!

She ceased, and the admiration of the ladies was much increased; for both of them declared they had never heard the lute more skilfully touched, nor more sweetness and delicacy of vocal expression exerted, than in the performance of this plaintive lay. Their curiosity was redoubled to learn her name and family; but the renewal of their enquiries was interrupted by the sudden appearance of the fair musician herself. She came hastily into the room, with the intention of speaking

to the Park-keeper's eldest daughter; when her eyes meeting those of the young ladies, she blushed, and, courtseying, besought them to pardon her intrusion; "for indeed," said she, "I did not know that my good dame was engaged with such noble visitants."

She was about to withdraw; but Lady Eleanor prevented it, by taking hold of her hand: and, having assured her that no apology was necessary, she said, "Permit me, my dear lady, to introduce you to the Lady Matilda, daughter of Lord Boteler."

The lovely stranger courtseyed a second time; and Matilda, with great affability returning her politeness, begged to be favoured with her acquaintance; telling her, at the same time, how much herself and her cousin had been delighted by the air and music they had just now overheard.

The fair stranger blushed at the commendation, and modestly replied; "Indeed, ladies, I was altogether unconscious that I had any

other hearers than those of this good family, who never interrupt me, or I should have forborne my complaining, and sighed in silence."

"I am therefore exceedingly glad," returned the baron's daughter, "that our visit was unknown to you, not only because it would have deprived us of the entertainment we have already received, but also because it might have lost us the opportunity of soliciting your acquaintance." The stranger replied with great propriety, and accompanied her speech with such elegancy of deportment, that the ladies were convinced the good Dame Alice had not by any means over-rated her merit; they therefore entreated her to accompany them to Queenhoo-hall, and partake of the morning refreshment She made some difficulty respecting her dress; but the ladies would admit of no excuse, and pressed her with so much importunity, that

she was necessitated to comply with their request.

The Lady Matilda and her lovely cousin varied the conversation, on purpose to give their fair visitor an opportunity of displaying her abilities. She answered the serious subjects proposed by the baron's daughter on the one hand, and as readily replied to the lively railleries of her more volatile cousin on the other; but at intervals a gloominess overspread her countenance, and, notwithstanding the efforts she made to conceal it, manifested a mind depressed with sorrow: yet the excellency of her understanding, improved by a finished education, displayed itself upon every occasion that called for its exertion.

After the little party had participated in the morning repast, the sports of the preceding day became the subject of their discourse; and the Lady Eleanor, addressing herself to the lovely stranger, enquired if she had been present at them. The young lady replied in

the negative; adding, "A long succession of misfortunes has alienated my mind from the scenes of tumultuous joy, and solitude is best suited to a broken spirit. I became a voluntary housekeeper; my services were thankfully accepted, and the whole family were spectators of the pastimes. I am indeed informed that several unexpected incidents took place, and prolonged the pleasures of the day."

"Your information is perfectly correct," returned the Lady Eleanor. "We had a savage from Fairy-Land, an unknown chevalier to overthrow him, and a justing well performed in honour of the ladies."

"I also heard," said the stranger, "that the Lady Matilda was proclaimed SOVEREIGN OF THE MAY, and inaugurated with a golden chaplet, embellished with jewels."

"Such was in truth the fact," returned Eleanor; "and as you was not upon the Green

at the presentation of this splendid ornament, you shall see it here."

"I beseech you, my cousin," said Matilda, blushing, and gently retaining her by the skirt of the supertunic; "I beseech you sit down, and let us change the subject; such fooleries do not bear the repetition."

"Say no more about it," answered Eleanor, withdrawing her garment; "the lady shall positively see the chaplet, and I am confident she will agree with me—that it is a very pretty foolery." So saying, she quitted the room, and returned in a few minutes, holding the jewel in her hand.—"Do you not think, my dear lady," said she, addressing herself to the guest, "that this costly garland indicates the munificence, at the same time that it proves the gallantry of the chevalier, who presented it to my cousin?"

The moment the fair stranger set her eyes on the chaplet, the blood forsook her cheeks, and she was much agitated; but when Lady

Eleanor presented it to her, she drew back with horror, and pushing it aside with her hand, exclaimed in great agony of mind, "Oh blessed Lady! Mother of God, protect me!—The man who possessed that chaplet is a murderer—is Darcy's murderer!" So saying, she closed her eyes, and falling back upon her seat, she fainted.

The Lady Matilda and her cousin were much alarmed by the effect the sight of the chaplet had produced on their fair visitor; and their uneasiness, as well as their astonishment, was considerably augmented by the dreadful import of her exclamation: they hastened to her assistance, but life appeared to be totally suspended; they summoned the female attendants, and ordered the house physician to be called; no remedies usually applied upon such occasions were omitted, and the stranger was recovering from her swoon when the physician entered the room. He found the young ladies much terrified; but after he

had examined the pulse of the patient, he relieved them from their anxiety, by assuring them she was not in the least danger: finding her, however, extremely languid, which he thought might arise from the depression of her spirits, he ordered her to be put into a warm bed, and kept as quiet as possible for a few hours. Every thing was performed in perfect consonance with his direction; and Matilda, attended by her charming cousin, sat by the bed-side, and watched the convalescence of the sorrowful fair one. Observing she was fallen into a sweet sleep, which was likely to prove exceedingly beneficial, they withdrew themselves as quietly as possible to the next chamber, in order that she might not be disturbed; when Matilda, whose heart was full, burst into tears, saying, "This glittering bauble," for the chaplet was deposited upon a table there, "is certainly the fabrication of some evil-minded artificer, made under the influence of malignant planets, and

contrived to diffuse a succession of troubles and vexations to its unfortunate possessors. So bless me, sweet Lady Virgin, as I wish I had never seen it!"

"No doubt," answered her cousin, "there are some wonderful circumstances involved in the history of this jewel; but do not, therefore, make yourself uneasy: whatever a future discovery may produce, you cannot possibly be thereby affected; and perhaps the whole of this misadventure arises from a mistake,—two chaplets may be made so nearly alike as to deceive the eye, and especially upon so slight a glance; for the lady had no opportunity of examining the ornament, nor did she even take it into her hands."

To this the baron's fair daughter replied, "Perhaps it may be so;" and, heaving a deep sigh, she added, "I hope it will prove so; but, at all events, I feel myself interested in favour of this unfortunate stranger—her youth—her beauty—her good sense and po-

lished deportment, are irresistible advocates in her behalf. She speaks of murder, and, if I mistake not, mentioned the name of Darcy; surely her troubles are no common ones. If you, my dear cousin, will wait here to assure her of our protection when she awakes, I will return to the Lodge; her family and connections appear to be known to the ranger's wife, and I cannot sit down, with the least satisfaction to myself, until I am acquainted with them." The Lady Eleanor, equally desirous of knowing somewhat relative to the history of their visitor, approved the design of her cousin, and promised, on her part, not to be neglectful. The Lady Matilda had reached the hall, when a loud rapping at the gate called her attention thitherward, and the arrival of Lord Edward Boteler, her father, prevented the intended excursion.

SECTION IV.

CHAPTER I.

In which the Story runs retrograde—The History of an old Witch, and an important Adventure at her solitary Cell—A Wrestling Match, and a Ghost.

The reader, I doubt not, will readily recollect, that a character was introduced in the May Games, called the Maid Marian, who officiated as the bride of Robin Hood. This damsel was none other than the daughter of Sim Glover, a leathern jerkin maker at Tewin; her name was Margery, and she was esteemed, and not unjustly, the handsomest lass on the Green; and on this account she possessed no small portion of vanity.

Now it so happened that Gregory the baron's jester, and Ralph the tasker, were both of them desperately in love with this same Margery. She indeed seemed rather inclined to favour Gregory, on account of his loquacity and learning, in which points his rival Ralph, who was a man of few words, had no chance with him; but, on the other hand, Ralph had a very powerful advocate in Dame Gillian, the fair damsel's mother, who was his staunch friend. There was also another circumstance in his favour; Dame Tabitha, his honoured parent, who was a widow, and Dame Gillian, were on the most intimate footing, being rarely apart whenever the least leisure afforded them an opportunity of gossiping with each other; and Tabitha was also exceedingly desirous that the union should take place. With respect to Sim Glover, he had no objection; for indeed whatever Dame Gillian thought proper to propose, he rarely contradicted: and thus Ralph seemed to stand

on fair footing. The day after the celebration of the May-games, Sim Glover and his wife were obliged to go to Hemel Hempstead, respecting a legacy that was due to them; and as Tabitha had officiated as a witness to the codicil, her presence was also thought to be necessary; and accordingly she agreed to go with them. Margery, not caring to sleep alone in the absence of her father and mother, solicited the company of her cousin Rose, daughter to Pierce the potter; and her desire was cheerfully complied with.

Early in the morning the three good folks had left Tewin; and as soon as they were fairly out of sight, our quondam maid Marian resolved on a frolic she had long wished for an opportunity to put in practice, and which at this time fairly offered itself to her; that is, she determined to visit a weird woman, who resided upon Datchworth Green, at the distance of four miles, or somewhat more, in

order to learn of a certainty which of her two lovers was destined to be her husband, and what good fortune awaited her in future; other motives also at this time impelled her to the execution of her scheme. She communicated her design to her cousin Rose, who was easily prevailed on to accompany her thither. This important undertaking being thus resolved on, as soon as they had finished their breakfast, they secured the windows, and, having locked the cottage door, proceeded towards Datchworth; but not being perfectly acquainted with the nearest way, Margery applied to Thomas, the reve's son, who met them accidentally in the back lane, for a proper direction. Upon her mentioning the weird woman, Thomas smiled, and said, "My pretty lasses, you are going, I suppose, to have your fortunes told. May holy Saint Dunstan abash the foul fiend, and send you all the good luck your hearts can desire!"

"I thank you, good Master Thomas," said Margery, casting her eyes upon the ground; "but in sooth your bolt has fallen wide of the mark. Our fortunes told, say you! No, no, we have other corn to grind, I trow; for we be going to find out who stole our over-gilt spoon, which we lost yesterday: and father thinks that Tib, the old blind pedlar's leman, took it while we were chaffering for some bobbins."

This said, Thomas, without any further hesitation, pointed out the way to them. "It is not indeed," said he, "the best path." So he wished them a pleasant walk, and, bidding them good-morning, went about his business. They strolled on without the least molestation, talking over the wonderful events that had taken place on May-day; and Rose declared, that she was determined to enquire of the witch concerning the strange knight, and the country whence he came. It was near

noon by the time they reached the old hag's hut, which stood by the side of a coppice, in a narrow dirty lane, that bore no marks of having been a thoroughfare for centuries back; the cot itself seemed to be of great antiquity, half its covering was carried away by the devastations of the weather, and the deficiency of the mud-daubing upon the walls admitted the wind from every quarter. In short, the outside of this deplorable habitation was so squalid and ruinous, that our two adventurers hesitated awhile, and neither the one nor the other dared to knock at the door, fearing that some evil goblin, instead of a woman, should open it for their reception. I shall therefore give them time to become more courageous, and, before they are permitted to enter the unhallowed cell, take the liberty of presenting to my readers a succinct history of the sibyl herself.

She was the daughter of a gentleman of fortune, who resided at Waltham Holy Cross.

Nature had been exceedingly unkind to her; for she was very ill-featured, and deformed from her birth. Her father, however, having no other child, was extremely fond of her; he remarked, that a peculiar sharpness pervaded her answers as soon as she could articulate them, and taking this propensity to be waspish for a symptom of extraordinary abilities, he superintended her education himself; for he was a man of letters, and endeavoured, by the cultivation of her understanding, to counterbalance the defects of her person. He had, however, mistaken pertness for wit, and cunning for genius. He was himself an infidel respecting religion; and his lessons were merely physical lectures, calculated to amuse the head, but not to amend the heart. The redundancy of idle ceremonies, which abounded at that time in the national church, were the constant objects of his contempt; the pride and hypocrisy of the church-men, with the abuses practised

by the monks, the friars, the nuns, and other religious votaries, afforded too much latitude for his satirical censures. He derided, and justly, the authority assumed by the pope, with his army of legates and cardinals; nor did the indulgences and pardons, wickedly exposed to sale, escape his ridicule: and thus far he was not to be blamed. Unfortunately, however, he did not stop here; but, through the abuses of religion, he made a desperate stab at religion herself; and because too many, who called themselves Christians, deported themselves altogether unworthy of their profession, he unreasonably condemned the system of Christianity on account of their misconduct;—not aware, that, while he attempted to disfigure the precepts of piety and holiness, inculcated by the gospel of Christ, he destroyed the soundest and most efficacious lessons of moral virtue. Young minds are apt enough to imbibe the poisonous disseminations of infidelity; no wonder, there-

fo[illegible], that the daughter followed implicitly the dictates of her father, and readily learned to ridicule every sacred institution. Indeed, this hapless female had no fair chance for the exercise of her own judgment under so partial a tutor. On the contrary, her mind, the moment it was capable of discernment, was warped from the principles of rectitude, and deeply impressed by those of a contrary nature; so that it would have been as easy a task to have reduced her distorted body to an elegant form, as to have restored her mind to the simplicity and meekness which true religion requires. When she had reached the age of twenty, a dissolute young fellow, named John Sad, who had spent his patrimony in riot and debauchery, and was fearful of being immured in a prison by his creditors, cast his eyes upon her, and determined to make a desperate effort to recruit his fortune, by uniting himself to an object which inspired him with horror. Accordingly, he

found an opportunity of opening his mind to her; and being a handsome well-formed man, not more than four years older than herself, he found no difficulty in prevailing upon her to receive his addresses. Their meetings were at length made known to her father, who was exceedingly angry upon the occasion, and commanded her sternly, as she valued his blessing, to see Master Sad no more. But as obedience to her parent was no part of her acquirements, and his blessing of less value than a rush, in her estimation, she set his threats at defiance, and, listening to the solicitations of her lover, married him privately. She then thought it necessary to acquaint her father with what she had done; and he, with great philosophic apathy, turned her out of his doors, and sent her clothes after her to her husband's apartment. She had a small portion independent of her father, which she made over to her husband, and this was shortly dissipated. She then felt, for the first

time, the miseries of poverty, cursed herself for her folly, and her father for his inhumanity. Her husband also, disappointed in his expectations, and haunted by his creditors, became peevish, and treated her with contempt. The haughtiness of her disposition would not permit her to endure such ill usage; they proceeded to high words, and from words to blows: the poor dame was worsted in the encounter, and so bruised by the beating she had received, that she was obliged to take to her bed, and two days elapsed before she was able to crawl down stairs. In about six or eight days afterwards her husband returned home: he came back in a better humour than he went away, and, by affecting to be sorry for what had passed, he regained her confidence; but in the night he purloined what few jewels she had remaining, which he sold to support his extravagancy. Soon after this event, her father died, leaving the bulk of his fortune to some distant relations, and

to his daughter a small pittance for her life, to be paid her monthly, but barely sufficient to prevent her from absolutely starving. This being made known to Master Sad, he watched an opportunity, and one day while she was gone to Waltham market, he hired two or three assistants, and packing up all the furniture that was in the house, her clothes and personal ornaments, with every thing that would bring any money, he took them away, leaving her in arrears for rent, without a rag to put on, or bed to lie upon. He disposed of his baggage to a broker at Enfield for less than half its value; and, having paid his assistants, proceeded to London, where he entered into the army, then on the march towards France, and fell in the famous battle of Agincourt: a death too good for such a worthless miscreant! His wife, on her return home, found the house stripped of every thing that was valuable, and herself suddenly reduced to extreme indigence. She stamped,

she screamed, and rent her hair in a paroxysm of raging madness; her father's memory she loaded with maledictions, blasphemed Heaven, and called for destruction on her husband. When the fit was in some degree subsided, she threw herself upon the floor, and lay deploring her misfortunes till midnight. As soon as she heard the ringing of the bell at Cheshunt Priory, she started up, unable to endure the torment of her own reflections any longer, and, impelled by her frenzy, ran down into the meadows, uttering execrations all the way, and plunged herself headlong into the river Lea. It happened, fortunately for her, that, the water being high, two of the millers from the town-mill were upon the banks drawing up the flood-gates; they saw what was done, and, hastening to her relief, arrived time enough to save her life, for which she was not grateful enough to thank them. This they attributed to her affright, and, with great humanity, took her into the mill-house, where

they laid a faggot upon the fire; and having warmed a pot of stout ale, grated a little nutmeg into it, and made her drink plentifully, which cheered her spirits. The event was soon bruited among the neighbours, and her miseries excited their compassion; a small subscription was set on foot for her present relief, her rent was discharged, and such necessaries as could not be dispensed with were procured for her: but her temper and her principles precluded her neighbours from associating with her; she lived alone in the midst of her fellow creatures, loved by none of them, but shunned by all. An opinion also prevailed among the lower classes of the people, that she had sold herself to the devil; and this story being propagated, the children followed her whenever she appeared abroad, treated her with various indignities, some hooting, some shouting, and others bawling out, *Here comes the old Witch.* She was therefore obliged to quit Cheshunt; and having hired

the miserable cottage just described on Datchworth Green, remote from every other habitation, she resided there by herself, and never went abroad, but to purchase the necessaries for subsistence. Her fame followed her thither; but the loneliness of her habitation secured her from the evil treatment she had experienced in a populous neighbourhood, and the notions which prevailed of her being a witch was by no means of disservice to her; on the contrary, she was frequently consulted by one or other of the rustics; some of them being desirous of prying into the secrets of futurity, others to discover thefts, and others again to know what days were fortunate or unfortunate for the pursuit of their business: and as none of her visitors could obtain the least information without crossing her hand with a piece of silver, she found the trade of prediction to be exceedingly beneficial, and therefore did not deny her compact with Satan; but in order to impress

the minds of those who waited upon her with stronger notions of her sagacity, she procured two or three old mutilated manuscripts of a large size, and filled the margins with various characters, perfectly unintelligible, and as uncouth as any of those which the reader may find abounding in the four books of Occult Philosophy, by the celebrated necromancer Henry Cornelius Agrippa: and as all old witches are supposed to have a great partiality for cats, (which, by the bye, the learned have asserted are not real grimalkins, but familiar spirits,) Dame Sad kept several, and among them three remarkably large ones, as black as a sloe; to these she paid peculiar attention.

We left our two damsels before the entrance of the cottage, impelled by curiosity on the one hand, and restrained by fear on the other, to announce their arrival. Curiosity, however, at length prevailed; and Mar-

gery, who was the most courageous of the two, struck gently a tap or two upon the door with her knuckles, when she was answered by a hoarse voice from within, desiring them to draw up the latch, and enter the dwelling. The sound appeared to them unlike the articulation of a human being, and Margery, crossing herself, retired from the door; when the voice repeated the former direction, adding, "If you want me, young women, why do you not come in?"

"Saint Agnes speed us!" cried Rose, "the weird woman knows us already, I trow."

"And therefore," rejoined Margery, "if we should attempt to run away, she will set her spell upon us, and keep us here till midnight: we had better do as she bids us; for it will be a perilous matter to make her angry."

So saying, she led her cousin by the hand, and pulling up the latch with caution, opened the door, and they presented themselves upon the threshold, where they stood trembling,

not daring to advance beyond it. The gloomy horrors of the oraculous cell were fully exposed to their view, and the Pythoness herself, who was seated upon a wooden tripod by the side of a few expiring embers, which she was turning over with her stick: her head was wrapped about with a volupure, so disguised with filth that its original colour could not possibly be discriminated, and through the torn places, which were numerous enough, her white locks stood up on end, for she had neither a veil nor a wimple to cover them: her dress was an old threadbare courtpie, patched with different kinds of cloth, and besmattered with dirt, so that it was perfectly rigid; her flesh was the colour of smoke-dried bacon, and her ferret eyes, which looked askance, were bloated with hovering over the wood-embers; upon the tip of her nose, which was very thin and prominent, she wore a large pair of barnacles, and they made no small addition to the uncome-

liness of her long lank visage. The moment the door opened, she elevated her head, which was shaken by the palsy, and, surveying the damsels, cried out, " Come in, and shut the door."

They had not courage enough to obey this mandate, but each of them dropped a low courtsey to shew their good breeding; and Margery answered, " We thank you, dame, but we be very well here."

" Did not I order you to come in?" replied the Pythoness peevishly. " What, in the devil's name, are the wenches afraid of?" At the mention of the word devil, the young villagers looked earnestly at each other, and courtseying a second time still lower than before, they advanced a step or two.—" Come nearer, I say," rejoined the witch. " But shut the door first, or I will call a goblin from the lake of brimstone to do it for me."

As she said this, she stretched out her arm, and overset by accident a pot full of water

upon two large black cats that were sleeping by the fire-side: the animals being terrified, and seeing strangers in the house, set up their backs, and began to spit and bounce about like furies. At last, rushing by the two damsels, they effected their escape at the door, just as Rose had laid her hand upon it to shut it.—"Benedicite!" cried she, and shrieked; and Margery, having crossed herself, began to count over her beads with great devotion, saying, "Help us, Lady Mary, and shield us from the foul fiend!"

"Out upon you!" cried the old woman. "Shut the door, I say. What, you two Jenny Howlets, are you such lozels as to take the cats for devils?" Rose then shut the door; and she and her cousin, making their obeysance a third time, approached nearer to the table: but they could not help noticing another sooty-coloured grimalkin couched upon the old hag's lap, which seemed equally dissatisfied with them, and lay mewing, while it

stared upon them with eyes like saucers, and could hardly be pacified by the caresses of its mistress.

The old woman then, pretending to examine a large book which lay open upon the table before her, drew her finger slowly down the margin, pointing particularly to several of the strange characters therein contained; and afterwards, taking her barnacles from her nose, she told the young women, to their great surprise, that they came from Tewin Lower Green, and that they were desirous of knowing their fortunes. She then assured them, that her familiar spirit had informed her of their coming; and added she, addressing herself to Margery, "You have got two lovers; you are proud at being thought handsome; and you are too fickle to determine in favour of either."

"I hope, forsooth, you don't say so for the nonce," answered Margery gravely; "but I had forgot," continued she, taking a milled

sixpence from her gipsire, "I have not crossed your hand with a piece of silver: there is a tester, dame."

"Thou hast some understanding, I perceive," answered the old woman. "Go to then, shew me thy hand." Margery then wiped the palm of her left hand, and presented it to her; she reinstated her glasses upon her nose, and after poring over it a short space, delivered the following oraculous verses:

I'll tell thee what, thou silly chit,
  The fair-hair'd man will prove untrue:
What will avail thee all his wit,
  When he, fond fool, bids thee adieu?

The shorter man, with hair so dark,
  Is honest-hearted, bold, and free:
What though he be no silken spark,
  He will for aye be true to thee.

Here she stopped short, and appeared to be much agitated. After a short silence, she stamped upon the ground, and said, "Do you not hear the croaking of a raven?"

" No, in good sooth," returned the girls, after having listened with great attention.

" It is a foul goblin, that means thee ill," said she to Margery. " Hark how it cries."

" Mary, mercy forbid," said the girl; " but in sooth I do not hear it, in good sooth I do not."

" It bids me cease to foretell," returned the dame, " and I must obey; for the sprite is a powerful one." Here both the young women looked fearfully about them, and the witch went on, still addressing herself to Margery; " Be not affrighted, nothing will hurt thee;—but mark my words: Are you determined to know of a certainty who shall be your husband?"

" Yes forsooth, dame," said she, " if it be possible."

" It is possible," answered the hag; " but have you courage"——

" Law now, I don't know," said she.

"To meet him," quoth the dame, "at twelve o'clock"——

"Yes forsooth," said the girl.

"Ay, but at night, and in the church-yard?" continued the witch. "Your companion may go with thee."

Rose shrunk back, but said nothing; and Margery replied, "Will not the ghosts and hobgoblins come to scare us?"

"Go to, thou fool; art thou afraid of thine own shadow?" answered the dame. "I'll answer for it, nothing worse than thyself will be there."

"Then I will go," said she, "and that is determined;—but the church is a great way from our house."

"Saint Thomas's oratory is much nearer," said the dame, "and that will do equally as well;—but can you read?"

"No, in troth," said Margery, "I be not learned."

"Why then let what I am now about to

say to you," replied the witch, "be strongly impressed upon your mind:

> Around the church see that you go,
> With kirtle white and girdle blue,
> At midnight thrice, and hempseed sow;
> Calling upon your lover true,
> Thus shalt thou say;
> These seeds I sow: swift let them grow,
> Till he, who must my husband be,
> Shall follow me and mow.

This being faithfully performed, your future husband shall surely appear to you."

"But will he not hurt me?" said she.

"Hurt thee, indeed!" returned the hag. "Why, wench, thou hast no more wit than a woodcock. No, no, he loves thee too well to hurt thee, I trow." And then she made Margery repeat the verses, until she had learned them perfectly by rote. This done, she addressed herself to Rose, who also gave her a sixpence, and half hiding her face with her wimple, came simpering forward.—"And you would have your fortune told, my girl?"

said the Pythoness. Rose nodded her head by way of assent.—"Show me your hand." She accordingly held it out, and the old woman, looking upon it, said, "The line of life, I see, crosses the table line."——

"Law now, that is more than I knew," said the girl.

"I perceive," continued the dame, "you will have two husbands,"——

"Oh dear," cried she, turning to Margery, and laughing.

"And if my art deceive me not," added the hag, "you will have six—eight—ten—yes ten children."——

"Mercy on me!" said she, blushing, and casting her eyes upon the floor.

"Your first husband," continued the dame, "will be a fair man, tall in person, and exceedingly good-humoured." Rose smiled, but said nothing. "But I much fear, by the intersection of the line of fortune ending in the line of love, that you will play him false,

my turtle: by this line it appears, that his bosom friend shall put the jilt upon him, and poor noddy will certainly be horned."

"Indeed but he shant though," said Rose, angrily withdrawing her hand; "if you cannot tell fortunes better than that, I would not give a rush for all your art."

"You need not be angry, my little dandypratt," retorted the witch, with a sneer; "what your stars have decreed must come to pass."

"And her second husband?" said Margery, smiling.

"He will be a Tosspot," replied the old woman; "a choleric shrewd knave: I would advise her to look well about her, for if she offends him he will swinge her soundly."

"Let us go, Margery," said Rose, pouting; "I do not want to hear the old shrew prate any longer."

"Hush, hush, my dear Rose," answered Margery, astonished at her temerity; "be-

sides, you have forgotten your intention of enquiring concerning the strange knight."

"I care not about him," said she; "if you chuse to ask any more questions, do; for my part, I shall keep my breath to cool my pottage."

"The history of the strange knight," said the old woman, "does not concern either of you; it involves a mystery not proper to be unravelled, but which time hereafter will explain.—And you," added she, addressing herself to Margery, "remember the charge that I have given to you; perform the ceremonies this night, and be happy; if you fail to do so, either through perverseness or fearfulness, you will expose yourself to much difficulty, and never afterwards have an opportunity of seeing what you most desire." These words were uttered by the Pythoness with a peculiar energy, and made great impression upon the mind of Margery. She promised to perform her part; and having again repeated

the incantations, she and her cousin quitted the squalid habitation of Dame Sad, and rejoiced in being restored to the sweet air and the sunshine.

By the time they returned to Tewin, and had taken some refreshment, it drew apace towards six o'clock; when Rose observing a number of villagers assembled on the Green, was desirous of knowing what was going forward, and Margery very readily agreed to accompany her thither. On their arrival, they learned that Ralph and Gregory had engaged to wrestle a fall or two, with holders, for a stoup of double ale. They had not been long there before the competitors appeared; and Ralph seeing Margery among the spectators, requested her to tie the blue ribbons round his shirt sleeves, and permit him to declare himself her champion. Gregory was equally solicitous of being honoured by his mistress, and insisted upon Ralph withdrawing his claim, which he as pertinaciously

refused; so that a sanguinary combat would inevitably have precluded the trial of skill, had not the company interfered, and advised them to decide the contest by lot. The contending parties, after some altercation, acceded to this proposition; and three thorns being procured from the next hedge, all of them unequal in length, they were, according to old custom, held in the hand of a person uninterested in the dispute, with only the larger ends exposed to view, and Ralph and Gregory drew each of them one. He who fortunately fixed upon the longest thorn was the conqueror, and the longest thorn was drawn by Ralph. Of course the ribbons were tied upon his sleeves by the lovely hands of fair Margery, and Ralph assumed the title of her champion. In the mean time, Margery's companion, the lovely Rose, compassionately performed the same office for the disappointed jester. The wrestling then took place; and Ralph, in defiance of all the shift-

ings and turnings of his antagonist, threw him fairly three times, without having sustained one single foil. The victory was proclaimed by the reiterated shoutings of the clowns, who hoisted the fortunate champion upon their shoulders, and bore him away in triumph to Hob Filcher's, at the Rose and Crown. Ralph veiled his bonnet as he passed by his beloved Margery; but for Gregory, he skulked away among the crowd crest-fallen, or, as Tom Tosspot observed, like a fox who had lost his tail.

This incident, trifling as it was in itself, could not have happened at a more propitious moment; for Margery applying the commendatory verses, uttered by the weird woman in favour of the dark-haired man, to her lover Ralph, of course the charge of inconstancy was referred by her to Gregory, who began to decline in her opinion. Upon re-examination of their persons, she thought that Ralph was the best-proportioned man of the two;

and though somewhat browner than his rival, his countenance was more comely, and bore much stronger marks of cheerfulness and good humour. Those ideas were greatly strengthened by the proof he had now exhibited of his powerfulness and skill in manlike exercises; so that, in proportion as the jester receded, Ralph gained ground in her good graces. It now became a matter of great importance for her to know, for a certainty, the event of this double courtship, and she conceived that her future happiness depended upon her obeying the mandates of the weird woman; for which reason, she determined that nothing should be wanting on her part. She found it, however, a very difficult task to prevail upon her companion to go with her, and she had not sufficient courage to undertake the adventure alone. Rose, who was exceedingly disgusted by the predictions, or rather maledictions, applied to her, abused the old dame without mercy, calling her a limb of Sathan; a false,

crafty, cousening queane; and maliciously added, "She is as ugly as a succubus, and only wants a hood of snakes to lead the dance of hobgoblins in a mystery play. I will have nothing to do," continued she, "with such a shrewish callat. Holy Saint Ann forfend! Why she may send a legion of her foul imps, and hurry us away in a whirlwind." Margery, on the other hand, exerted all her eloquence to quiet her cousin's apprehensions, and to excite her curiosity; and continued to solicit so long and so urgently, that she positively teized her into a compliance. Her importunities being successful, she hastily dressed herself in a white kirtle, over which she bound a girdle of Coventry blue; and reaching a wimple to Rose, she adjusted her own, and, arm in arm, they proceeded towards the oratory. The church-clock at Tewin struck eleven a few minutes after they had quitted the cottage, and crossing the common at the bottom of the baron's park, went through a

bye lane leading to Bramfield oratory, without seeing a soul, or meeting with the least interruption. Entering the cemetry, they proceeded to the church-porch, depressed by involuntary sensations of terror, and there they seated themselves close to each other, and continued for some time silent. At length Margery, taking her companion by the hand, said, "My dear Rose, do you not think that all this is very silly?"

"By my troth," replied Rose, fearfully, "I know not; but if I were at home again, you should not find me silly enough to return and hunt goblins here."

"I beseech you, be not scared," answered Margery; "as sure as eggs be eggs, there will not come any thing to hurt us."

"Belike you think then," said Rose, "the false old trott has sent us upon a fool's errand?"

"Speak not so loud," returned Margery, hastily; "I would as lief the fox had stolen

half our pullain, as that Goody Sad's friends should overhear you."

At this time a cloud passing over the moon, cast a gloom upon the surrounding objects; and the night being remarkably still, they heard the church clock at Tewin strike twelve, the solemn hour appointed for the performance of the mystic rites. Some minutes, however, elapsed before our heroine found herself sufficiently courageous to quit the porch, and venture alone into the cemetry: and had it not been that her cousin was witness to her timidity, she would certainly have returned without performing the magical circumambulations, or repeating the charm; but resolving not to expose herself to the future ridicule of her relation, she went forth, and taking some hemp-seeds from a little pouch attached to her girdle, she cast them behind her, uttering the momentous words which she had learned from the weird woman. She passed twice round the oratory,

and nothing appeared to molest her; but having performed the ceremony a third time, and repeated the invocation, she saw the resemblance of a man, with a scythe upon his shoulder, come over the stile, and he followed her: she was dreadfully affrighted, and, rushing into the porch, caught her cousin in her arms, saying, "He is come! he is come!" At the same moment, the spectre, bearing the perfect resemblance of Ralph the tasker, saving only that his countenance was much paler, approached, and made a long stroke with his scythe at the entrance of the porch: the girls shrieked out, and Rose hid her face with her wimple. The apparition said nothing, but looked very wishfully at Margery, pointing at the same time to a ring of gold, which he held in his left hand, as the emblem of wedlock; then, bowing very obsequiously, he threw his scythe over his shoulder, and stalked away. The damsels were so much terrified by what they had

seen, that they dared not to quit their seats, until the crowing of the cock apprized them of the morning's approach; when Margery looked out, and seeing nothing in the form of humanity near them, encouraged her cousin to return; and they ventured to leave the porch, leaning upon each other's arms, and, trembling as they went, passed over the consecrated ground in profound silence. Having gained the bye lane, they quickened their pace, but frequently cast their eyes with great anxiety behind them, being fearful that the goblin might follow them; nor could the popular tradition, which asserts that spirits cease to be visible the moment the cock has crowed, pacify their apprehensions. When they reached their home, they fell upon their knees, counted over their rosaries with great devotion, said several paternosters, and ave-mary's; and, finally, recommending themselves to the protection of the blessed Virgin, they hastened to bed. When their fears had

somewhat subsided, Margery addressed her cousin, saying, "My dear, dear girl, was you not dismally abashed?"

Rose burst into tears; and, sobbing violently, replied, in broken sentences,—"Abashed, forsooth!—alas!—Saint Agnes forefend I should again be so aghast!—ever and anon I wished to have died—I was scared out of my five wits—I would not for a thousand angels of red gold, that the foul fiend should return, so I would not."

Her tears prevented her proceeding; and Margery, whose heart was nearly as full as her own, made answer, "I shall go wode, if you do not stint your sobbing and crying. If it was a hobgoblin, it came in the shape of Ralph; and Ralph won't harm us, I trow."

"Saint Withold quell him, and keep him from coming again; and may the murrain take the shrewd gap-toothed beldam, and her wicked witchcraft!"

CHAPTER II.

A developement of some important Matters—The introduction of a new Character—And a whimsical instance of Rustic revenge.

THE morning was advanced before our two adventurers found themselves inclined to close their eyes; when, overcome with fatigue and agitation of spirits, they fell asleep. Margery awoke first, and, seeing that her cousin was resting very comfortably, arose and dressed herself without disturbing her. Just as she was opening the window-shutters, her gossip Cecily, the baron's milk-maid, passed by; who, saluting Margery with a good-morrow, observed, that she had played the sluggard that morning; "for," added she, "the third bell, I warrant, will ring before you can straw your room with rushes."

"Is it so late?" returned Margery with a sigh: "in sooth I rested poorly last night, and vast ugly dreams disturbed my rest."

"Why marry then, I trow," answered Cecily, "you are not the only one in the village who could not sleep for evil sweyvins; poor Ralph the tasker"——

"Benedicite! and what of him?" said Margery, hastily.

"Why," answered Cecily, "he is at death's door, I warrant you: he was sorely beset last night by the foul fiend, and hurried over hedge and ditch by hobgoblins;—they say he has been beaten till his body is of as many colours as the rainbow, and so scratched and clapper-clawed, that he has not got whole skin enough upon his carcase to cover the top of a cream-pot."

"The more's the pity," cried Margery, trembling. "Saint Mary save us from night spells! He was goblin-led, I trow."

"He takes on mainly, I can tell you," re-

turned the milk-maid, "and if you be not hard-hearted you will go see him; for you knows, as all the village knows, he loves you dearly."

"Marry now," answered Margery, affecting to laugh, "you have been putting a seely jape upon me, I trow."

"How, a jape!" cried Cecily. "By'r Lady, it is a goodly jape, indeed, for a man to be scratched to death by evil sprites. It will be a shrewd ill turn of you if you laugh when you see him, I can tell you that;—but I must not tarry carping here;—and so, good bye to you." This said, she left our fair damsel to her own cogitations, and proceeded without delay towards Queenhoo-hall.

Margery was struck with astonishment, when she heard the evil consequence of her impertinent curiosity. She wished the old witch and her host of familiars had been overwhelmed in the Red Sea, or carried away upon a besom. She then blamed herself for

her own temerity, and sincerely lamented the part she had taken towards the tormenting of her future husband; for she now fully believed that it was Ralph himself, in his proper person, who had appeared to her, impelled to do so by the powerfulness of the wicked invocations she had been taught to use. She determined, however, to visit him instantly; and, without awaking her cousin, put on her wimple, and went to the habitation of her lover. When she entered, she found the poor tasker alone, wrapped up in a houpland, seated in an elbow-chair; his back was supported by a bolster, and his head closely bound about with a large kerchief over a white volupure. The sight moved her compassion; she came to him with much less ceremony than she had been accustomed to use, and very tenderly asked him how he found himself. His eyes glistened at the sight of Margery; and the earnestness of her enquiries made him think that he was not altogether

indifferent to her. He answered her with a faint voice, saying, "he had been a grievous sufferer; but because it had been for her sake"——

"For my sake, Ralph!" cried she, affecting an air of surprise. "Why, I hope you do not impute the smallest part of your sufferings to me?"

To this he replied, "I came to see thee, forsooth."

"To see me!" retorted the damsel, "Heaven bless thy wits! Why, man, I fear me thou art wode."

"Indeed, Mistress Margery," answered Ralph, "I shall be stark wode if you be cruel;—but I did see you last night, as sure as I see you now."

"And where, good Ralph?" said she hastily.

"In the porch," quoth he, "of Bramfield oratory."

"You have been dreaming, I trow;" an-

swered Margery; "for what should have brought you to Bramfield oratory?"

"The devil, or his dam, for aught I know," said he. "You say I was dreaming; but odds fish, it was a right earnest dream. Why you must know that last night, just before it sounded twelve upon the bell at Tewin church, I was seized as it were with a thousand cramps at once, which made me roar like a tyger; I was then taken up, as I thought, upon a cowl staff, and whisked down stairs in the twinkling of an eye; the door opened of its own accord, and I was hurried over the quicksets at the bottom of the common. I was then bounded above the trees in Park-lane, and afterwards soused into the horse-pond in old Wicke's cow-yard, where I was drenched like an howlet upon a duck's back. I was then drawn through the orchard hedge, and whirled against the holly bush on this side Bramfield church-yard, where, being tumbled over the stile, a scythe was put, I know not

how, into my hands, and I was constrained to come to the porch, where I saw two young women seated; one of them had her face covered with her wimple, and the other, bedight in a white kertel, was, for all the world, like you. Saint Thomas help me, but two peas in a pottle could not bear a nearer resemblance to each other!"

"This is passing strange," cried Margery; "certainly you did not say your night-spell, or the foul fiend could not have had so much power over you. But what happened afterwards?"

"A very perilous adventure, I promise you," quoth he. "I was hurried back in the same guess way that I went, over hedge and ditch, without any mercy, so that my wits were upon end; and when I came to myself, I was lying upon the bed, full of bruises and scratches, as though I had been kicked for an hour by Wilful, the baron's unruly horse, or scarified by a clowder of wild cats."

Margery, heaving a sigh, wiped away a tear or two which started from her eyes, and, looking bashfully upon the ground, returned for answer, "So help me, dear Lady Virgin, as I am sorry for your misfortunes, neighbour! and as your mother is from home, I will kill one of our chickens, and make you a mess of white broth for your dinner, and bring with me a bottle of clary to raise your spirits. Take heart, man; what, I warrant you shall not be lost for want of care."

Here Ralph, taking her hand, pressed it to his lips, and kissed it with much fervency. He then thanked her for her courteous offer, which he accepted with gratitude, and gallantly added, "The pains I endure from the scratches and bruises I have received are of small account, when compared with what I feel in my heart for the love of you."

"Fye now, Ralph!" said Margery, blushing, and carelessly folding and unfolding one

corner of her wimple; "you are glossing over a leasing tale."

"I trow,"——

Here Ralph clapped his hand upon his left breast, by way of confirming his assertion, and the damsel went on: "If it be sooth as you say, for my sake look to yourself and get well, and let no more be said about this hobgoblin story; and then, if it liketh ye, talk to father and mother,—if they have no objections to our union, perhaps I may not."

"By the holy rood," cried Ralph, "this bell rings sweetly!—Such music, dearest Margery, will make me a whole man ere long!—By'r Lady," continued he, catching her in his arms, and enforcing a kiss before she was aware, "I shall be well anon!"

"I did not expect this," said she, breaking from him, and assuming an air of pettishness; "go to, you are rude, Master Tasker."

Ralph, seeing that he had gone too far, pretended to have hurt himself by his exer-

tions, and uttered a low groan or two in confirmation. He then proceeded to apologize for his behaviour, attributing it to the excess of his love, and promised not to offend again in like manner; concluding with a hope that she would not go from her word, and swearing if she did, that he would certainly put an end to his own existence, and that his troubled spirit should haunt her every night.—"If that be all I have to fear," answered the damsel, "I trow my sleep would not be much disturbed;—but, however, I shall not give you cause of complaint unless you deserve it." So saying, she took her leave; and Ralph comforted himself with the hope of her returning again with the broth and the wine, according to her promise.

The exertion which Ralph had made, and the struggling of the damsel to free herself from his embraces, deranged the bandages from his temples, and Margery perceived that there was not the least appearance of

the scratches he had so much complained of; moreover, the manner in which he pressed her to his bosom did not accord with that of a sick and languid person, but rather of a lusty young lover, in his full health and vigour.—" Surely," said she, as she shut the door after her, " I am gulled by this ousel; but and it prove so, I will lead him a dance in earnest, to the full as shrewd as this he pretends to have measured." Just as she was turning these thoughts in her mind, she saw Thomas the reve's son coming towards the dwelling. She instantly recollected talking to him on the morning they went to Datchworth Green, and it occurred to her that it was likely some juggling had been contrived between him and her lover. In order to discover the truth, she concealed herself from his sight behind a holly bush; and when he had entered the dwelling, she drew up close to the window, where she overheard the conversation which passed between the two

friends: and hence she learned, that Thomas, having met her and her cousin as aforesaid, and finding they were going to consult the weird woman, pointed out to them purposely a round-about way; and the moment he had parted from them, run to his friend Ralph, advising him to be beforehand with them, and, by bribing the witch, prevail upon her to deliver her oracles in his favour. Dame Sad proposed the church-porch business; and it was by her council Ralph pretended to be ill, in order to excite the compassion of his mistress, and secure her affections,—all which, excepting the mistake he had made at the conclusion of the scene, he had performed with much ingenuity. Thomas had also informed Cecily, the baron's milkmaid, in confidence, that Ralph had been goblin-led; well knowing that she would keep the secret, as such good folks usually do, by taking the earliest opportunity of telling it to her gossip Margery. And now the reader

will not be surprised, that the damsel readily accounted for all the wonderful transactions that had taken place; at the same time acquitting Mother Sad from the charge of dealing with the devil for any part of her information. It was, however, a bitter portion to Margery; for she found that she had been completely duped.—"But if I be not even with this knight-errant of mine," said she, as she retired from the window, "I will permit him to set up my name as a silly lozel upon Hob Filcher's sign-post." She went home without the least delay; and not chusing to communicate the secret to her cousin, told her she had a message of some consequence to deliver to Cuthbert the barber, which had been forgotten, and begged of her to keep the house until she should return. She then opened a little cabinet that stood in her chamber, and took from it an angel of gold, which was all the money she had in her possession, and thrusting it into her gipsire, she pro-

ceeded to Cuthbert's dwelling upon the Lower Green.

This man, who exercised the functions of a tonsor to the village, had in his youth been taught to read; and possessing some smatterings of learning, without sufficient judgement to digest them, was exceedingly pedantic. He was continually prating, like a parrot, concerning himself and his performances. His harangues were unconnected with common sense, and totally unintelligible to the lower classes of the people, with whom he passed for a person of wonderful abilities. To his profession as a barber, he added that of a cow-leech, and his practice had, in several instances, proved successful: he was also skilled in phlebotomy, and drew teeth to admiration. In the latter part of his life, (for he was far advanced in years,) he became acquainted with a foreign pretender to astrology and physic, and had the address to get possession of some of his nostrums. Upon

the strength of this acquisition he resolved to commence physician, and undertake the cure of the human body, without possessing any one of the requisites for such an engagement, or even a shadow of anatomical knowledge. He used, it is true, a variety of technical terms, and spake of the muscles, the tendons, the ligaments, the cartilages, and the nerves, but never with propriety, generally substituting one for another, and constantly mistaking the uses of them all. He had observed, that perspiration was frequently productive of the most beneficial effects; and therefore he conceived, that it might, with the utmost propriety, be applied to every species of disorder which affects mankind. In order to facilitate the execution of this chimerical enterprize, he actually expended a considerable sum of money in constructing of hot baths, building of sweating rooms, and providing such things as were necessary for producing the operations, (for

so he called the sweatings) which he imposed upon his patients. His mode of reasoning in defence of his practice was in this manner: All disorders proceed from the foulness of the blood; but perspiration carries off the redundant humours, and purifies the blood; and therefore perspiration is a cure for all disorders. Accordingly, if a man's finger or his toe chanced to ache, the whole person was put into a state of requisition, and sweated until the pain was withdrawn from the toe or the finger. Some laughed at the tonsor's humour; others reprobated his conduct, and swore that Diggory the sexton would amass a fortune if he was permitted to continue his practice; others, again, insisted upon it, that he had performed many wonderful cures. It must be in the moon, then, said a fourth party; for we know nothing concerning them upon the earth.

To this sagacious descendant of Esculapius our angry damsel had recourse. She

found him at home, employed in ascertaining the true altitude of the sun, with the assistance of an astrolabe. She was exceedingly desirous of obtaining an instant hearing, and solicited the same with great importunity, but in vain; he would not return her any satisfactory answer before he had completed his calculations. This momentous matter being settled, he gravely addressed himself to his fair visitor, and enquired into the cause of her coming.

She, on her part, without any useless interlocution, opened the subject in the following manner: "You must know, Master Cuthbert, that poor Ralph the tasker has lost his wits. He is stark-staring mad; and, woe the while, his mother is from home, and there is not a soul that dare go near him, to take care of him; you cannot devise how much he scared me just now; he swore such obstropelous oaths, and looked so wildly, and then he talked of hanging and drowning!

Now, you see as how all the village knows that he is in love with me, poor heart, and I would not have any harm come to him for all the king's forests." Here she wiped her eyes, and sobbed, as though her heart had been full. Proceeding, in broken accents— "because the naughty folks might say that it is all along of me."

"I understand you," quoth Cuthbert very gravely. "Well, do not cry so, my fair damsel, but go on."

"Why then," said she, counterfeiting an air of sorrow, "the short and the long of the matter is this, I would have you take him under your care, and bleed him, and sweat him purely; I know his mother will take it in main good part, and pay you well for your trouble when she returns."

"Why, look you, my pretty lass," replied Cuthbert, clapping his arms behind him, "fair words butter no parsnips, and hawks are not lured with empty hands. I never praise my-

self, the world knows my merits; let any one go to John Fitz-Lomas, of Woolmer Green, and ask him, or to Hagan the Lorimer of Hartford, and ask him; I snatched them both from the jaws of the grave: they were destróyed by the gout, torn to pieces by the rheumatism, shook by palsies, lamed by cramps, tormented by spasms, and breathless by asthmas; in short, they were walking spittals when they sent for me; and what, trow you, did I?—It is well known I do not prate in my own praise—let them speak if they will—why, by thirty-nine operations, I cured the one, who had been ill twelve years, three months, and two days; and, by forty-three operations, I learned the other to walk, who had gone upon crutches for twenty years and five months, bating three days, six hours. These are the benefits that accrue to mankind through me; but I praise not myself. Can all the learned leeches in the king's dominions produce such cures as these? No! nor

in the world, I trow; and what did these men, when I had made them as sound as two roaches? Why, like churlish unthanks, they cheated me of my fees, and swore that I did them no good at all: And then what is to be said of Michael, the coster-monger? I grant you he died; but it was because he would not take his bitters, nor go into the fiftieth operation; had the pettish knave done so, he would have been alive now, and as merry as a grig; but what must my fool do? marry, when I had set him almost right upright, he went away from me, has recourse to Deval John, a pragmatical pretender to physic, and away he was whisked in a hurry to Tewin church-yard; and then it was said that I, forsooth, killed him, by giving him the dropsy. Oh that Michael was a false lordane! By the belt of Saint Christopher, I ween, the shrewd knave died to spite me, and so I was tricked out of all the money that was due to me for my trouble. Master

Ralph may pay me in the same coin; and therefore I think it safest and best to follow the old English law—touch pot, touch penny; for a bird in hand outvalues two in the bush."

"Benedicite!" cried Margery, "you take me, I trow, for a crazy Bessy; forsooth, I know better than to fish for a leech without a bait, and be not come empty-handed; Dame Everid, I doubt not, will unbuckle, nor mall, if your operations do but take the proper effect; but sure bind, sure find, they say; and I will pay you for three or four before hand:" So saying, she gave the golden angel into his hand.

He cast his eyes upon the coin, and putting it into his purse, with much affected gravity, he replied, "Of a truth, you are wise beyond your years, my pretty damsel, and have such winning ways with you, that one cannot refuse you any thing. I am not used to praise myself, but it is certain that I can cure where others kill—and so you say the young man is mad?"

"As a hare in March," quoth Margery.

"Why, there it is," said the barber, "you have done wisely in applying to me; for all the village knows, if they would speak frankly, that the cures I have performed are passing wonderful; but it is a peevish set of witlings, who regard not merit; they are such silly woodcocks, that they had rather be murdered by licence, than healed without it; for what are the licensed practitioners in physic, but murderers? with all their annals, their gally pots, their glasses, their ventoses, and boxes of lectuaries, with whole loads of wash-draughts, dregs, and drugs, to load the stomach, impede the operations of nature, and nourish diseases?—I'll none of them—I never praise myself, but shall only say, the gout, the rheumatism, and the dropsy, are my gamut. An operation of ten hours, ten times tried, would send them all to Belzebub, their father. Consumptions I fight in their own way, and outsweat the sweatings concomi-

tant with the disease: but, if you speak of the megrims, mopings, or melancholies, or of phrenzies, and raging madness, I can give them their check-mate; twenty or thirty operations may do in slight affections of the mind; but, say the worst, permit me to extend them to sixty or eighty, and barring accidents, such as dying in the practice, or the like, and I will engage my life for theirs, I bring them out as fine, and as fresh, as an hawk from her moulting."

"I do not doubt your skill," said Margery, interrupting him; "but, I beseech you, for the sake of humanity, to remember, that delays are dangerous; if the foul fiend should tempt poor Ralph to make away with himself while we are talking, I shall certainly pine myself to death."

"By the mass," answered Cuthbert, "you are in the right; but I am thinking how we shall get him hither."

"He is vastly strong," said Margery, "when

the fit is on him; I pray take help enough: three or four sturdy churles must go with you; I will lend you father's cart, you have got a horse; for the love of the blessed Virgin, make no delay."

"You say well," quoth the barber; "and there are three soldiers, big men of brawn, at Hob Filcher's, I will hire them; and when we have once got our patient down, myself, with Jenkyn the bearward, and Tom the tailor, may manage him easily enough."

"But be sure to bind his arms," said Margery; "and, above all things, put a gag in his mouth, or he will raise the neighbourhood. When you first go in, you will find him as quiet as a mouse; he will tell you he is full of scratches and bruises, and as weak as a widgeon; but when he learns your errand, he will swear like a bellswaggerer, declare that he is as well as ever he was in his life, and, if not hastily prevented, he will lay about him like a fury."

"As for that matter," said Cuthbert, "let me alone to manage him; I'll tame him before sunset, or eschew my profession."

He then sent for the soldiers, who readily agreed to assist him; swearing, that they did not value a madman, although he might be possessed with a swarm of devils. The horse being harnessed, was lead to Sim Glover's, and the cart was made ready, when the barber, with his myrmidons, mounted, and drove through the back lane to Ralph's habitation, where they all got out, and, leaving the vehicle in the out lodge, Cuthbert, to prevent suspicion, proposed to go in first to the patient, and see what could be effected by fair means; but he placed the soldiers at the side of the door, with orders to enter the moment they heard him whistle. It was by this time somewhat turned of noon, and Ralph, having sent away his friend Thomas long before, was alone, anxiously expecting the return of Margery with the broth, according to her pro-

mise: he had caused all the bandages to be replaced afresh, and was in perfect readiness to receive her, when a gentle tap at the door announced the arrival of some one. Ralph's heart began to flutter, as he cried, with a faint voice, "Come in;" the door opened, and, to Ralph's astonishment, not Margery, but Cuthbert, entered the room. The loquacious barber seated himself upon a joint-stool by the side of the tasker, saying, "How now, friend Ralph, I am sorry to find thee in such a plight. One, I dare say, that loves you well, has sent me to visit you."

Ralph readily comprehended that it was Margery he was speaking about; and though, at the same time, he sincerely wished the barber anywhere but there, thought himself obliged to carry on the farce, and especially as he conceived that his mistress had sent him for pure love's sake; and therefore he replied, in a faint tone of voice, "In sooth,

neighhbour Cutbert, I ha' been but ill at ease."

"Yes, yes, I see that," said the barber, shaking his head.

"But I be better now," continued Ralph.

"Better!" cried Cuthbert, "Why then do I see you bound up in this manner, like a corpse in a winding-sheet?"

"O," said Ralph, "I be full of bruises and scratches."

"Off then with these bandages, in the name of Saint Luke," quoth the barber; "I have a salve that will quell the pain in a second, and heal them in a couple of hours; away with them, my friend, away with them."

"By no means," cried the tasker, resisting the efforts of the barber, who had begun to remove them; "the wounds are new dressed, the pain is stinted, and I be doing well."

"Do not tell me of doing well," returned the barber, catching hold of his arm; "fye, what a pulse is here! and yet you tell me you

are doing well! By the holy cross of Bronholme, you was never doing worse in all your life!"

"Cogs bones," exclaimed the tasker, "you will persuade me I am mad."

Here Cuthbert groaned, and shook his head.

"I tell you," continued Ralph, "I feel no pain, nor the least uneasiness, but what you give me by this disturbance. I want to sleep; I have had no rest all night, and I prithee leave me, for I find myself main sleepy."

"Leave you, indeed!" cried the barber, "Heaven forefend! To suffer you to sleep in this plight, were to give you over to Diggory the sexton, and make worms meat of you. Your blood, honest Ralph, is in a perilous ferment, and the morbid humours ascend to the brain as thick as mots in a sunbeam. Come, you must lose a little blood," continued he gravely; "I never boast of my own merit, but I am the man shall set you to

rights in a hurry; after bleeding, we will put you into an operation, and then you will be as comfortable as if you were in paradise." So saying, he took from his pouch two long fillets, and his bleeding instruments, which he laid upon a table that stood before him, and enquired for a bason.

The tasker's patience was now quite exhausted; he expected Margery every minute, and wisely foresaw, that if he could not get rid of this troublesome visitor before her arrival, his dissimulation, of necessity, would be discovered; he therefore determined to change his tone, and rising up suddenly, overturned the table on which the barber had deposited his bleeding apparatus, clinched his fist, and exclaimed, "By the holy-rood, I will be left alone! Away with your knackeries and your nonsence; when I want you, I will send for you."

"Ah poor man," replied the barber, shrug-

ging up his shoulders, "I see how it is with you."

"By the mass, I am glad on't," returned Ralph; "and if you do not get out of the house, I beseech you take a fool's advice, and do not oblige me to behave uncivilly."

"As for that matter, Master Ralph," said the barber, "I must abide by the consequence; I can only say I am your friend, and will not suffer you to be lost for the want of proper remedies. Come, come, stint these passions, choler increases your ailment; sit down quietly, I will not take much blood from you, nor hurt you so much as the pricking of a needle."

"Art thou possessed?" cried Ralph; "by the blood of Saint Thomas, I think the king fiend Satan himself is in thee! By the mass, Cuthbert, thou art stark wode!"

"In your eyes, I doubt not," returned the barber, shaking his head.

"And will you not go?" continued the tasker angrily.

"Certainly not, my friend, without performing my duty," replied Cuthbert coolly; and at the same time taking up the lancets and fillets from the floor, he replaced the table, and deposited them upon it a second time.

"Once more," said Ralph, "I desire you to quit the house."

"And once more, my fine fellow," answered the barber, "I must tell you that I will not leave you."

"Why, then, you are an obstinate old fool," quoth Ralph; "and may the arch fiend quell me, if I do not turn you out of the house, neck and heels together:" So saying, he seized the barber by the collar of his tunic, to put his threats in execution, when he, retreating towards the door, whistled aloud: The soldiers immediately rushed in to his assistance, and the poor tasker was presently

overpowered. However, he did not submit without violent resistance, and struggled more like a Hercules than an invalid; they pinioned his arms, and tied his legs, regardless of the bitter execrations he uttered, and the vows he made of vengeance; but, when he began to bawl aloud for assistance, they thrust a gag into his mouth, and having laid him at full length in the cart, they covered him over with the bed-rug; they then shut the cottage door, and conveyed him quietly to Cuthbert's habitation. The little vixen who had occasioned all this mischief, took her stand at her chamber-window, where she watched, with much anxiety, the approach of the cart. When it passed by, she was greatly disappointed at not seeing Ralph, who, as the reader has been informed, was covered over with a rug at the bottom; she was therefore fearful that her project had failed of success; but, as she was preparing herself to visit the barber-doctor, one of the soldiers returned

with the cart, and from him she learned, that the enterprise had terminated, in all respects, consonant to her most sanguine wishes. "And now," said she to herself, as she returned to her chamber, "my loving turtle will have small cause to laugh at me for my simplicity; I only lament that the shrewd Master Thomas, his friend and adviser, is not his companion in this fool's purgatory."

SECTION V.

IN WHICH LORD BOTELER IS INTRODUCED, AND THE STRANGER LADY DECLARES HER NAME AND HER FAMILY.—PROVES THE BEAUTIFUL CHAPLET TO BE HER OWN.

THE Lady Matilda, hearing that her father was arrived, laid aside her wimple, and hastened down into the hall to receive him. He came without company, and having saluted his daughter, they passed into the refectory, where the baron took some refreshment. When the table was uncovered, he jocosely enquired why the Lady Eleanor did not make her appearance to welcome him to Tewin. "I thought," added he, "you had

been inseparable companions; but I hope she is well?"

"Perfectly so, my honoured lord," replied the lady; "and, if she had known of your arrival, would not have suffered me to come alone:—but the reason of her absence will be best explained by a recital of several extraordinary adventures that have succeeded each other in the course of a few hours." She then related to her father all the material circumstances that had taken place at the May-games; the occasion of her meeting with the fair stranger at the Lodge; and the manner in which that lady had been affected at the sight of the chaplet. "And now," said she, "my dear cousin, whose tenderness is not unknown to you, my lord, is seated by the bed-side, and watching the termination of the lovely stranger's slumbers."

"Compassion well befits the nurtured mind," replied the baron, "and the hallow-

ed works of charity add double lustre to all the other virtues; but the events which you have now related, have no precedent."—After musing a small space, he added, "By the faith that I profess, they exceed my comprehension; but, in truth, my dear Matilda, they alarm me also. I beseech you, my child, to make me your confidant. I give you my solemn promise, that I will never force you to an union contrary to your own inclination; I therefore hope, on your part, you will not blindly cast yourself away upon a man unworthy of you."

"I hope," said Matilda, anxiously, while the tears glistened in her eyes, "I hope, my dearest honoured father, you do not harbour such a suspicion?"

"No," returned the baron, pressing her to his bosom, "no, my child; by the saints we hourly supplicate, I do only," continued he, holding both her hands in his, "wish you to remember, that at all times you would

consider me as a friend to advise with, rather than as a father to restrain."

"You are," said she, affectionately, "you are my father, my mother, and best, best friend." She then pressed his hands to her lips, and bathed them with her tears.

At this moment the Lady Eleanor entered the room, and, running to her uncle, who received her in his arms, she welcomed him home.

As soon as the mutual congratulations were over, Matilda enquired concerning the fair visitor.

"She is still sleeping," said the Lady Eleanor, "very composedly; and I have placed Dorothy, your ladyship's gentlewoman, as my substitute, with orders to acquaint me when she awakes."

The baron then caused his lovely daughter to repeat the greater part of the circumstances she had previously related to him. He dwelt particularly upon the sudden illness of

the stranger lady, in whose cause both Matilda and her cousin had so much interested themselves, and the declaration she had made concerning the possessor of the chaplet, that he was a *murderer*; but the whole appeared to be an inexplicable mystery, involving, however, some matters of great importance.

The baron became very thoughtful, and an interval elapsed of perfect silence; when Dorothy, striking upon the door, informed the ladies that the fair visitor was awake, and had enquired anxiously for them, expressing her desire of returning to the Lodge.

At the mention of the word return, the Lady Matilda cast her lovely eyes upon her father, without uttering a single syllable; but meeting his by a kind of intuition, entreated permission for the lady to remain with them.

The baron perfectly understood her meaning, and replied, "I think, my dear Matilda, you should use your endeavours to prevail upon your visitor to abide with you, at least

until she is perfectly recovered from her indisposition; for the accommodations at the Lodge, I fear, are not sufficiently extensive to make her situation there so comfortable as it ought to be."

"My dearest lord," cried Matilda, kissing his hand, "that is exactly consonant with the request I was about to make; and, with your permission, I will signify your invitation to her myself."

"By all means," replied the baron; "go both of you: and when she is able to endure the sight of a stranger, I pray you let me be introduced; for I do not know any reason," continued he, with a smile, "why you should engross an handsome lady to yourselves. In the mean time, I have some letters of consequence to write, and can dispense a while with your attendance." So saying, he ordered his writing-desk to be brought; and the ladies, followed by Dorothy, withdrew.

The fair stranger had nearly adjusted every part of her habiliments when the ladies entered the room. She received their compliments with so much modesty and elegancy of manners, that her acquaintance appeared to be still more desirable; and the excuse she made for the trouble she had occasioned, was couched in the most pathetic terms, and concluded with appropriate expressions of heartfelt gratitude. Her auditors were charmed with the graceful manner in which she delivered her sentiments, and remained silent; when she, having wiped away the tears that gushed from her eyes, the involuntary witness of a wounded mind, heaved a gentle sigh, and thus resumed her speech: "It is now full time for me to withdraw from this happy mansion. Joy veils his head where I appear, and plainly tells me I ought not to interrupt the felicity of others." After a pause, she added, "I am indeed well aware, that the sorrows which depress my mind render me

unfit for the company of all, but those who, like myself, are forlorn and wretched."

"We must not hear you say so," my dear lady, replied the baron's fair daughter, embracing her very affectionately; "nor indeed shall we be prevailed upon to part with you at an easy rate."

"By no means," added the Lady Eleanor; "for a mind overwhelmed with grief ought not to be left to itself to brood over a succession of melancholy reflections, much less ought it be coupled with another mind suffering under an equal depression: such ill-judged conjunctions are frequently productive of fatal consequences. But the truth is, both the lady my cousin, and myself, are agreed to *insist* (permit me to use that term) upon your remaining with us at least a few days, if it be only by way of trial; for we are determined to exert our abilities to amuse you."

The lovely visitor bowed her head, and

modestly replied, "Your courtesies and condescension, my dear ladies, like the bounties of benevolent saints and angels, freely bestowed upon an unfortunate stranger, claim my grateful acknowledgments. I feel the full force of an obligation conferred in so delicate a form, which doubles its value by the elegancy of its disguisement. But, alas! I have learned, from woeful experience, that sorrow is a contagious disease; for it not only affects the mind in which it takes up its residence, but spreads, in a degree, its baleful influence to all around it."

"But give me leave," replied the Lady Eleanor, "on the other hand, to add, that cheerfulness is the best antidote to the contagion; nay more, it will not only prevent the bystanders from infection, but will also communicate, though perhaps but slowly, its salutary effects to those who are struggling with the potent malady. This remedy requires your application; if it should prove,

as we trust it will not, unsuccessful, after a fair trial, the loss will be our own, and may prove our want of skill; but I will answer for it, our solicitude shall not be subjected to the least impeachment."

The pensive fair one bowed her head in token of assent, and was silent. The ladies then informed her, that she was going to be introduced to Lord Boteler: and Matilda, perceiving she received this intelligence with some degree of discomposure, added, "We have made my honoured parent, who is but lately arrived, acquainted with the principal circumstances relative to the chaplet; and, my dear lady, you may be assured, that when we introduce you to him, we shall introduce you to a sincere friend, and I am certain he is impatient to see you."

The fair stranger shook her head, and, casting her eyes upon the ground, replied, "I do not, my dear benevolent ladies, in the least doubt the excellency of the baron's heart:

the amiable qualities of the daughter lead me to expect all that is great and noble in the father. But, alas! my spirits are dejected with my fortune, and I am unfit to move in that rank I once thought myself born to fulfil. If I might stand excused"——

"Indeed we must not permit it to be so," said Eleanor, taking her by the hand: and at the same moment the bell was rung in the hall, to announce that the dinner was upon the table.

The two ladies presented the fair stranger to the baron, who politely rose from his place to salute her; and himself conducted her to the principal seat, covered with a velvet cushion, bidding her welcome to Queenhoo-hall. She returned his compliment with so much sense and good breeding, that he was at once convinced his daughter had not overrated her understanding or her quality. During the repast, the conversation was employed upon divers subjects of general importance;

but after the table was cleared, and the servants withdrawn, the baron gave it a more particular turn, and came by degrees to the adventures of the May-day; and after mention had been made respecting the chaplet, he addressed himself to his lovely visitant, and begged to know, how it should have been possible for that jewel, the sight of which had so affected her, to be in the possession of a knight, who, from his splendid appearance, and numerous retinue, appeared to be a person of some considerable rank and opulence? He paused; but seeing she had cast her eyes upon the ground, and seemed not prepared to answer the question, he went on, "I do not wish, my dearest lady, to draw from you the least information relative to your family, or of the circumstances that have made you unhappy, further than shall be consistent with your own good sense and prudence to declare; but I certainly must wish, as well for your sake as for

my daughter's, that some clue might be found to unravel at least so much of this mysterious adventure as relates to that chaplet."

"In truth, my lord," returned the young lady, sighing, "it is totally inconsistent with justice, reason, or gratitude, that I should conceal from you, and these dear ladies, the least circumstance relating to myself and to my misfortunes, especially since it is those very misfortunes that have procured me your notice. You see before you the only branch now existing of the Darcys of Foleshunt, in Essex."

"How!" exclaimed the baron, greatly surprised; "Are you the daughter of John Lord Darcy?"

"My lord, I am," returned the lady; "and perhaps your lordship knew my father?"

"I, by the holy rood," said the baron, "I knew him well!—But where is then thy brother?"

"I have no brother!" cried she, bursting into tears.—"He is murdered!—His loss I deplore!—And the wretch, who murdered him, robbed us of that fatal garland!"

Her tears put a stop to her discourse, and her auditory sat looking upon each other, and wondering what might be the event of a history, which began in so strange a manner.—"'Fore heaven," exclaimed Lord Boteler, "I am greatly surprized!—The murderer of a nobleman present a chaplet to my daughter!—This matter must be sifted closely: —But," added he, recollecting himself, "perchance, my dear lady, here may be some mistake; is it not possible that two such chaplets may be made by the same artist, and so nearly resembling each other as to deceive the eye, even upon a minute investigation, and especially when they are not both together, in order to be compared the one with the other?"

"Your objection, in any other case, my lord," replied the fair visitant, "would be a weighty one; but there is a certain peculiarity attending this jewel, which will readily prove that I am not mistaken: the intersection of the rose with the lily, upon the front, is a device of my dear brother's; and behind the rose-leaf, which protuberates at the bottom, you will find his name with mine, enamelled and embossed with gold."

"Pardon me, my dearest lady," said Eleanor, hastily, "but indeed there is no inscription upon the jewel."

The lady answered, "I do not wonder at your assertion, because you do not know that the rose-leaf, which I have pointed out, may be turned back by pressing upon a small rose-bud towards the left hand, which communicates with a spring unseen, and gives it liberty."

"Where is the chaplet?" said Lord Boteler.

"You shall see it instantly, my lord," returned his lovely daughter.

And while she was gone to fetch it, his lordship thus addressed himself to Lady Darcy: "But if these marks be really wanting upon this jewel, the accusation of the knight falls to the ground, unless it shall appear that the inscriptions have been removed."

"They cannot be removed," returned the lady, "without destroying the device, and that I saw was perfect."

The Lady Matilda now returned, and putting the jewel into her father's hand, he pressed the rose-bud according to the direction given him; the leaf fell back, and he saw, inscribed with letters of gold, the names of Henry and Emma Darcy. It was now evident the fair lady was not deceived; Matilda and her cousin were silent; while the baron surveyed the chaplet with great attention.—"It is exceedingly rich," said he, "and elegant; but not sufficiently so, I should hope,

to entice a nobleman, bearing the honours of knighthood, to forget his duty, become a thief, and add the crime of murder to his atrocities. Every circumstance relative to this jewel tends to excite our curiosity; for which reason, I hope, we may prevail upon you, Lady Darcy, to continue your history, and inform us by what manner it was taken from you."

"The loss of that chaplet," replied the fair Emma, "involves the cause of most of my misfortunes, at least of such of them as are the most aggravated and poignant: a full detail of them would exceed the bounds of your patience to hear; and though I shall endeavour to relate them as succinctly as possible, I fear the long succession of melancholy events, which of necessity must be touched upon, will be tiresome, if not disgusting."

"I beseech you," said the baron, "to have no concern upon our account; but favour us with the narrative, as circumstantially as pos-

sible. Nothing can be more interesting to a feeling mind, than the escape of beauty and innocence from sorrow and oppression." The young lady blushed, and bowed her head. The baron's fair daughter, and her cousin Eleanor, drew their stools near to the seat of Lady Darcy, who began to relate the history of her sufferings.

SECTION VI.

EMMA'S TALE—WITH THE SEQUEL OF RALPH'S CALAMITY.

CHAPTER I.

In which Lady Emma Darcy begins the History of her Adventures; and as this Chapter contains little more than common Occurrences, the Reader is at liberty to hurry over it as hastily as possible.

"It is, my lord, no doubt, well known to you, that John Lord Darcy, my father, was forbid the court, on account of some expressions uttered by him respecting the conduct of the ministers during the regency of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester. He retired in disgust to his estates at Foleshunt Darcy,

near Maldon, in Essex. In this retirement, he married Elizabeth Saint Clere, the daughter of Richard Baron of Saint Clere, of Gay Bowers"——

At the name of Saint Clere, the Lady Eleanor whispered to her cousin Matilda, and the baron thus addressed the fair speaker: "Pardon me this interruption, my dear lady; but there is at present a young nobleman at court, who is in great favour with the king, and he calls himself Saint Clere: we have the pleasure of being acquainted with him; and indeed I expect him at Tewin in the course of the week. I understood he came from Essex, and I presume he may be some relation to you."

"No, my lord," replied the Lady Emma, "that cannot be; for there is but one descendant of that ancient family existing there, and that is an unworthy cousin, and he lives in great obscurity at Gay Bowers, his paternal seat.—But," said she, having

paused for a moment, "I have been informed that there is a younger branch of the Saint Cleres, who have been many years settled in the northern parts of England; and probably the nobleman you mention may be thence descended."

Lord Boteler bowed his head without returning any answer, and the lady proceeded.

"My mother had five children, two sons and three daughters: one of the sons and two of the daughters died in their infancy. After nine years seclusion from the court, the baron, my father, was called upon to pay a heavy subsidy, which had been voted by the Parliament. This exaction he was bold enough, I dare not say imprudent, to resist; and publicly, in the county court at Rumford, accused the ministry of violating the rights of the people, by laying heavy imposts upon them, which no law could justify, and which they ought not to bear. These speeches, so openly delivered, could not be passed over

unnoticed; in fact, they were represented with great exaggeration to the regent, who determined to have him attached as a traitor to his country, and brought to public trial. My father, however, had a good friend in the cabinet, who sent a trusty messenger to give him timely notice of the proceedings that were preparing against him. He left the country without delay, and had the good fortune to escape into Flanders. My mother remained behind to settle the family affairs in the best manner she was able; and, having collected what ready money she could, she placed the writings of certain estates belonging to her in the hands of Eustace Saint Clere, her elder brother, and empowered him to receive her jointure. When the regent heard that my father had left the kingdom, he laid an attainder on the manors of Foleshunt and Darcy; the baron was cited to appear on a certain day in the courts at Westminster, to answer the charge of high trea-

son; and because he did not obey the summons, a sentence of outlawry was passed against him, and the estates were declared to be forfeited to the crown. My mother quitted her native country with a heavy heart, and took with her my brother and myself; he was somewhat more than five years of age, and I not quite two. We passed the sea from Dover to Calais, and thence we travelled into Flanders, where we found my honoured father: he had purchased a small but convenient mansion from a particular friend and relation of his, who resided in that country. Our habitation was situated in a pleasant village, named Beaumont, near to Avenes, which was under the protection of the Duke of Burgundy. The baron thought himself perfectly secure in this retreat, because the nobleman who presided there was at that time highly offended with the Duke of Glocester, on account of his marriage with the Lady Jaqueline of Bavaria, notwithstand

ing her husband, John Duke of Brabant, was living: she had preferred, it is true, a bill of divorcement against him, but the issue of the suit was not determined in her favour. The regent passed the seas with a considerable army into Flanders, in order to take possession of Hainault in right of his wife: but the Duke of Brabant, her first husband, being powerfully assisted by the Duke of Burgundy, opposed him so vigorously, that he was constrained to return from the continent, without effecting the purpose for which he came.—But why do I dwell on these circumstances? they are, no doubt, much better known to you, my lord, than to me.

"My father, disgusted with the manners of mankind at large, formed little or no acquaintance with his opulent neighbours: but, flying from society, he rarely went abroad, and was as rarely visited, except by his friend and relation the Chevalier John Boucmel, with whom he was extremely intimate; and

hardly a day passed without their seeing each other: neither was it of any consequence at whose house they met; the welcome was equally candid on both sides, and given without any frivolous ceremonies. The leisure that my dear parents found, from their recluse manner of life, afforded them greater opportunity of superintending the education of my brother and myself, which they did with much solicitude; calling in the assistance of tutors best acquainted with such branches of knowledge as they judged most proper for us to acquire. My brother, though trained to martial exercises, was however well grounded in the polite arts, and esteemed an accomplished scholar. It was his desire to become a soldier, and his military studies were pursued with much ardour.

"At the age of eighteen, on the day appointed for esquires to tilt, he won a rich suit of mail armour, by maintaining the field on his party against all comers, at a justing

appointed by the constable of Hainault. This dawn of his prowess was hailed by my father as an omen of future glory. "Go on, my dear child," said he, "in the path of honour, and acquire the ability to do your country service; and, if I mistake not, she will have great need for men of valour to support her cause."

"My brother's inclination being perfectly consonant with this advice, he was continually soliciting his father to procure an establishment for him in the English army, serving at that time in France. Whenever a victory was obtained by our brave countrymen, in the midst of his acclamations of joy, he would lament, that he had not been present in the action, and a partaker of the glory. My dear mother exerted herself to check this military ardour, (for she was fearful of parting with him,) but in vain; and my father was actually arranging matters to procure him a command under some experienced warrior: but,

before his friends had succeeded to his satisfaction, he was seized with a violent fever, which the power of medicine could not restrain, and in the course of a fortnight he died. My mother was inconsolable for his loss: and although my brother and myself used every endeavour to assuage her sorrow, our efforts were ineffectual; for, in less than six months after the decease of our dear father, we lost this excellent parent also.

"Thus my brother and I were left to ourselves, at a time of life when we most needed the assistance of good advice: both of us young and unexperienced in the ways of the world; he not having attained his twentieth year, nor I my seventeenth. Providence assisted us by the interference of my father's intimate acquaintance, and friend, Chevalier John Boucmel, who humanely took upon himself the management of our affairs, and acquitted himself with the greatest tenderness and integrity. The estate upon which we re-

sided, consisted principally of a well-built mansion, with no more land belonging to it than was necessary for the use of the family. Our means of subsistence depended on certain estates that had been made over to our uncle, the Baron of Saint Clere, previous to the confiscation of the manors of Foleshunt and Darcy, together with the annual income from my mother's dowry. The monies hence arising had been remitted to us with great punctuality until the preceding year, when a considerable defalcation was made, with promise to account for it in the succeeding payment, which, however, came not to hand.

"My mother, upon her death-bed, requested that her dowry might be equally divided between my brother and myself, and he faithfully promised to fulfil her desire. He not only kept his word, but extended his generosity beyond the bounds of moderation; for soon after the funeral ceremonies were performed, he put into my hands a deed, by

which he made over to me the whole of my mother's property; saying, at the same time, "My dearest Emma, whatever may happen, I can never want while I wear a sword, and England needs a soldier." I refused to take the deed, and assured him that the portion assigned to me by my dear mother was sufficient. He would not be so answered, and I continued to decline his offer; and, at last, we agreed to refer the matter to the Chevalier John Boucmel, our father's intimate acquaintance and friend. The good old gentleman smiled at the ardour of our contest, and said, "My dear children, the warmth of affection which you manifest for each other, does you both great credit; but the matter cannot be settled at present: You must call to mind that you are both minors, and therefore this instrument is altogether invalid without the consent of your uncle, who, I understand, is your guardian." My brother then took the opportunity of laying before the chevalier a

fair statement of our affairs. He was much surprized when he heard that our remittances had been deficient; and advised us, incontinently, to part with the house in which we resided, to sell the furniture to the best advantage, and go ourselves to England and inquire into the cause of this delay. "There," said he, "you may settle yourselves advantageously in the bosom of your friends and relations; and you, young gentleman," addressing himself to my brother, "through the medium of your uncle's interest, will, no doubt, easily obtain a commission in the army, so be it you remain determined to give up a life of ease and inactivity, for a career of glory." My brother's eyes sparkled at the idea, he grasped the chevalier's hand with much earnestness, thanked him for his excellent advice, and pledged himself to follow it implicitly; and, at the same time, begged his assistance in the disposal of the property. "With respect to the mansion," said the

chevalier, "I sold it to your father merely to oblige him; and as it has lately been put into good repair, I will act on the same principle with you; that is, I will return you the full purchase-money; and you, my dear children, are welcome to the use that has been made of it.—Nay, I beseech you, do not interrupt me," for my brother and I were both attempting to express our gratitude: "You know that a strict intimacy was maintained between your father and myself; but perhaps you have yet to learn, that, in the early part of my life, he rendered me many important services, which I have not forgotten: since, therefore, it has pleased God to take him from us, those claims of gratitude which belonged to him, become your due; and believe me, my dear children, to be your sincere friend. I am much surprized at the failure in your remittances, and perfectly agree with you, that your journey to England is necessary: but, at the same time, when you have settled mat-

ters there, if you should, for any reason, prefer being in this country to your own, my house will ever be open for your reception.—Hold," said he again, preventing us from speaking; "I am thinking about the disposal of your furniture, and that I can get rid of it better than by public sale. A few days past, Duville, my neighbour, was desirous of engaging a house like this for a friend of his, a merchant of Brussels, who is retiring from business; if he be not already provided, this house may suit him; and as the furniture is exceedingly neat and appropriate, it will answer both your purposes, if he will take it at a fair valuation. I will go to him this instant, and, if possible, close the bargain with a word." So saying, he hurried out of the room without giving us time to express our thankfulness.

"Next morning our good friend returned. "I give you joy, my dear children," cried he; "I have been successful: my neighbour

is empowered to use his discretion; and has agreed to treat for the whole of the furniture as it now stands. He will be here presently with a person, who is a judge of its value, to examine it; and I have engaged a man of probity to do the same on your behalf." In short, the parties met, the goods were valued perfectly to our satisfaction, and one week was allowed us to prepare for our removal. Our dear benefactor insisted on our making his house our home.

"At the appointed time, we discharged all our servants, and quitted the venerable mansion; but not without some few drops that involuntarily fell from my eyes. We resided nearly a month with our friend; and when he found that he could not detain us any longer, he consented to our departure. "But," said he, "to-morrow I shall have occasion to go to Amiens, and, in my way thither, shall pass through Landrecy and Saint Quinten; I am desirous of prevailing on you

to accompany me in this journey: it is indeed a much wider circuit than it is needful for you to make, but, at the same time, it will afford the young lady an opportunity of seeing more of the country; and, to prevent fatigue, the stages shall be made as easy as possible: it will also be more safe, if not more pleasant, to travel with company, especially as the lower borders of Flanders are infested with freebooters. From Amiens, where I must leave you, the road is direct to Abbeville; and thence, through Saint Omars, to Calais; and all the way you will be under the protection of your countrymen."

The Lady Emma had proceeded thus far, when suddenly a violent clamour was heard in the hall, which somewhat alarmed the ladies, and they withdrew to their apartments; and the baron rang the hand-bell, and being

answered by one of the pages, he enquired into the cause of the disturbance.

"My lord," said the page, "it is Gammer Everid, the mother of your lordship's tasker, Ralph, with Sim Glover and his wife, who desire to speak with your lordship immediately, upon a matter of life and death."

"Indeed," said the baron, rising from his seat, "it ought to be somewhat of consequence to occasion such an outcry; prithee show her in."

The page obeyed, and the old woman, covered with blood, was ushered in between her two neighbours, to the baron's great surprise.

"Holy St Anthony, my good dame," said he, "what mischance has happened to you!"

"May it please your honour's grace, I am a poor lone woman," replied the good woman, sobbing, and wringing her hands; "my husband has been dead, Heaven rest his soul! five years, seven months, and three days, at

the hour of vespers. Oh he was a rare-good man, ywis; and my boy Ralph, the staff of my old age, takes after him to a charm; and if your lordship will not take the poor boy's part, and cut the tramels in which he is mewed by that grey-bearded preacher, Cuthbert the barber, he will be murdered."

"Murdered!" cried the baron; "is the barber so desperate a man?"

"He will kill him as dead as a door-nail. Oh me, Oh me, what shall I do!"

"Why, good woman," said the baron, "if you talk on in this manner, how am I to know your grievance? Speak one of you," addressing himself to Sim Glover and his wife.

Sim was about to reply; but Dame Glover placed herself before him, and thus addressed his lordship: "May it please your nobleness, just two days ago, Sim Glover, your lordship's varlet, and myself, with Goody Everid, went to Hemel Hempstead, which your

grace knows is three or four leagues beyond Saint Alban's, because, as how Sim, your lordship knows, and myself, had some business there, and Dame Everid went along; for she had set her merk to a parchment will, and was a witness; so, and please your honour, we all went together; I and Sim rode upon Oldcrop, and Dame Everid upon the hobby, which Hob Filcher bought for madam Rut, the doctor's wife, but was returned because it is wall-eyed."

"Stop, good dame," cried the baron, "what has this to do with the barber?"

"Nothing, your honour, but I was telling the whole truth; and Allan, the parish-clerk, when I went to Master Bailey about Strawberry, your honour's cow, that was stole by crook-nosed Dick, the rat-taker, bid me to tell all that I knowed."

"At this rate, we shall not have done till midnight: come, Dame Everid, cease your

lamentation, and let me hear what you have to say respecting the barber and your son."

"Why, your honour," said the dame, sobbing, "when I comed home from Hemel Hempstead, which was about nine o'clock this morning, I found the things in my house at sixes and sevens; nay, the very house was turned out at the windows, as one may say, and Ralph taken from home by the knavish barber, poor lad, against his will, and carried to the Lower Green, where he has bleeded, and shaved, and sweated, till he is as thin as a lash, a mere walking-string, and his face is as gaunt as a lanthorn."

"And all this done against his will?" said the baron.

"As sure as I be before your honour, Ralph told me so; and if your honour does not take him out of the vile barber's clutches, and that right soon, he will be dead anon—and then what shall I do for my boy, my poor boy Ralph!"

The baron knew not well what to make of this discourse; but, however, he thought it the best way to send for Cuthbert instantly, and hear what he had to say upon the subject. A messenger was then dispatched, requiring his instant attendance; in the meantime, the circumstances relating to Ralph's sufferings were more fully explained.

The baron could hardly refrain from smiling when Cuthbert entered into the room,—his face covered with black patches, just over the parts that had been marked by the nails of Dame Everid: and when he was questioned relative to the present state of the tasker, he replied, with much gravity, that he had only performed his duty; for that Ralph was totally out of his wits, and he would prove so in the face of the whole world. "I have put him," continued he, "into a rare operation, and he is nearly restored to his reason; but, as your lordship knows, it would not become me to praise myself; yet, if I be not hindered

in my proceedings, I will make him as tame as a lamb by twenty operations more. Why, my lord, when I took him first, he was in a doleful paroxysm of madness; the prior of Tewxbury's bull was never more furious; it required the utmost exertions of three brawny knaves, besides what assistance I could give, to confine him—when in comes this good dame, who is almost as mad as her son, for she was preparing to unbind him; and, because I prevented the endangerment of all our lives, by keeping her from him, she set upon me in my own house, beat and bruized me to a jelly, and scarified my face with her nails; moreover, she beat her own head against the bed-foot, and by that means her head is covered with blood in this unseemly manner."

Dame Everid here lost all her patience, and exclaimed, "Thou art a false knave, and I will prove it to thy beard; you threw me down, you know you did, and brought in

your big-boned churles to thrust me into the street, and forced me from my son, who is nearly murdered already, and, by the blessed Lady Mary, he is as much in his wits as you are!"

The baron then demanded from Cuthbert by what authority, or by whose orders, he had proceeded so far with the tanker.

Cuthbert then related the whole of what had passed between Margery and himself; and did not forget to tell him, that she had paid him for the three first operations.

Sim Glover and his wife were much astonished at this information; it was also a matter of equal surprize to Dame Everid.

The baron then thought it necessary for Ralph to be brought, and also to have Margery before him, in order to learn from her the motives for her proceedings.

When Margery was introduced before the baron, and saw the bloody appearance of

Dame Everid, and the patched face of Cuthbert, she was terribly frightened; and, conceiving that some affray of a very serious consequence had taken place, she fell upon her knees, intreating forgiveness, and made an ample confession of every circumstance, from the communication with the weird-woman, to the bargain she had made with the barber-doctor.

The developement of this curious transaction included so many ridiculous circumstances, that the company could not refrain from laughter; and especially when Ralph was brought forward, wrapped up in a blanket, supported by two of the baron's domestics, his shaved temples appearing before the volupure, and his countenance was so lank and pale, like that of an emaciated bishop ascended from the grave. He surveyed the company with a wild and a vacant stare, which would, in some measure, have confirmed the

affirmation of the barber respecting the loss of his senses, had not the treatment he had endured been made known.

The baron, finding that nothing more serious was likely to come from what had passed, commanded that Ralph should be restored to his mother; that the money Cuthbert had received for his trouble, should be laid out in nourishing food to restore the poor tasker to his pristine vigour; admonishing the barber, by the loss he had now sustained, to be more cautious how he proceeded in future, and not to mistake health for disease, nor sanity for madness. With respect to Margery, he was somewhat more severe: He admonished her not to be so anxious of prying into the secrets of futurity, nor to sport with the life or constitution of another, but to mind her spinning, and endeavour to perfect herself in the duties of a good housewife. This done, he prevailed upon the dif-

ferent parties to take each other's hands, to disclaim all ill-will in future, and then dismissed them.

CHAPTER II.

Lady Emma's History continued.—A Tempest, and an adventure worthy the attention of the Reader.

As soon as the uproar, occasioned by the investigation of Ralph's misfortunes, had subsided, the ladies returned to the room of state, and earnestly requested the Lady Emma to resume her narration, which she did in the following words:

"In our road towards Abbeville, we came to a large plain, exceedingly dusty, and without any shade, so that the heat of the sun, which was still high, became very oppressive. To the right was a large wood, through which a beaten path seemed to lead in the direction

we were travelling. My brother, conceiving it would fall into the main road again, was desirous to make the essay; the rather as he saw some woodmen employed at a distance, from whom he might enquire concerning the justness of his conjecture; accordingly, he entered the recess, and I followed him. When he came up to the rustics, they informed him that the path did actually lead towards Abbeville, and that by pursuing it, we should save at least half a league of our journey. We were much rejoiced at this information, and found the cool air in the shade exceedingly refreshing. We rode on several miles without the least interruption; and coming at last to a spring of clear water, I entreated my brother to stop, that I might taste some of it, for I found myself exceedingly thirsty. "In good time, my dear Emma," said he; and both of us alighting, he fastened the horses to a tree, and taking a horn that hung at the end of his bauldric, without which he seldom travelled,

he dipped some of the water, and presented it to me, which, at that time, seemed to possess more desirable qualities than the most precious wine. He then took his huke from his saddle-bow, and spreading it upon a bank of moss, we both sat down at the foot of a large oak, by the side of the rivulet: the birds were singing among the branches of the trees, and every part of the scene was so truly romantic, that I could not help smiling while I thus addressed my brother: "Methinks, my dear Henry, we are like the hero and heroine of some legendary tale, seated by the purling stream, listening to the songs of Philomel, and waiting for some great adventure." "But giants and dragons are not the champions of the present day," said he. "I know it," returned I; "yet the situation, now realized to us, bears more analogy to the spirit of romance, than ever I thought likely for me to experience." This led to longer discourse, respecting the reverse of fortune that had

brought us to that spot: but our conversation was interrupted; for the day growing suddenly dark, a brisk gale of wind agitated the leaves of the trees, and, by its murmuring around, announced a change of weather. "Come, my dear Emma," said my brother, "let us mount our horses, and make the best of our way to Abbeville; for, if I be not deceived, we shall have rain before we complete our journey." He then assisted me to regain my saddle, and leaping hastily into his own, we turned the path with no small degree of alacrity; but the darkness increased, and we heard the thunder rolling at a distance. To complete our misfortunes, we now came to a place where three other paths fell into our path, and all of them seemed to be equally beaten. We had no time for consideration: the rain came on with great violence. "We must not stop," said my brother; "I will neither turn to the right or the left, but take the road that lies immediately before me." To this I

readily assented; and we rode on without making any abatement in our speed, till such time as it grew so dark that our horses could not readily find the way, and were frequently frightened by the lightning, which was exceedingly fierce and tremendous. The rain fell in torrents, so that the thickest trees afforded no shelter; besides, my brother assured me, that it was exceedingly dangerous to stand under them during the thunder-storm. I now began to be exceedingly fatigued, which my brother perceiving, slackened his pace. "And indeed," said he, "I doubt that I have mistaken the path; for certainly the time that we have been riding, is more than was necessary for us to have reached Abbeville." "I fear it is so," replied I; "but surely it will not be proper for us to return: without doubt, we are near the borders of the forest, and possibly may find some house to give us shelter." I had scarcely spoken, when we heard the sound of the vespers bell, be-

longing to some distant monastery, which greatly rejoiced us, and in a short time we came to an open road. The tempest increased, and the night was dark beyond conception, excepting only when the glare of the lightning illuminated the objects round about us, which so much terrified our horses, that we could hardly keep them in the path; and twenty times, at least, I narrowly escaped being thrown from mine. My brother, apprehensive for my safety, was continually calling upon me; and though I was frightened nearly to death, sinking with fatigue, and drenched with the rain, I answered him with all the cheerfulness that I was mistress of, and did not let him know my danger, nor how severe my sufferings were. At length, to our mutual joy, we perceived, at a small distance before us, a light, resembling that of a lamp or candle, which indicated the habitation of some human being; we rode up to it, and had the satisfaction to find that it

was placed in the window of an inn, and, apparently, by no means a small one. We knocked at the gate, and having obtained admittance, enquired if we could be accommodated there in such a manner as our uncomfortable situation required? To which the innkeeper, with a low bow, replied, "No where better, and please your honours, in all Picardy." My brother then sprang from his horse, and caught me in his arms, as I was descending from the saddle, and recommended me to the hostess and her daughter, who were come to receive me. I was ushered into a room hung with tapestry, as old, for aught I know, as the time of the Norman conqueror. The hostess, seeing that I was thoroughly wet with the rain, caused a large faggot of wood to be brought, which was liberally cast upon the hearth, and set on fire in an instant. My mantle, and the other external parts of my clothes, were taken away to be dried in an outer-room, but I retained

my coat-hardy, the sort of tunic I always used when travelling in the summer. I seated myself before the fire, and in a little time the dampness was perfectly exhaled. The hostess, meanwhile, was exceedingly loquacious first boasted much of the accommodation th inn afforded; and afterwards, giving her con versation a different turn, she seemed ex ceedingly desirous of knowing who we were whence we came, and whither we were go ing. I did not, however, judge it necessar to satisfy her curiosity any farther, than b acquainting her, that we came from Amien were proceeding to Abbeville, and had lo our way. "Blessed Mary Virgin!" crie she, "to Abbeville!—You have indeed lo your way, marry, and in truth; you are at th time as far from Abbeville, within a leagu at least, as when you was at Amiens!" My br ther now joined us, and the hostess procee ed no further. He was followed by the ho who came to welcome us, and to inquire wh

kind of refreshment we should choose, adding, that his house afforded the best of every kind. My brother desired him to bring us some good wine, and to make it hot with spices, as a preventative to cold. He then pulled off his huke, his mantle, and his upper tunic, which was no sooner done than the hostess brought him her husband's Sunday cloak to throw over his shoulders, while his own garments were drying, so that a second faggot was added to our fire; and the host returning with the wine, pulled out a little cup from his pocket, which he filled from the flaggon, and drinking a waisall to us, gave a smack with his lips, and declared it was the best in all Picardy. He then filled our cups, and placed the flaggon upon the table, enquiring what we would order for supper. "That order," says my brother, "must depend, my good host, upon what your larder will furnish." "As for that indeed," said he, "had you been lucky enough to have come

the day before yesterday, by Saint Anthony, I could have furnished you with any thing, from an ortolan to an ox; but, not expecting such good company to-night, I have killed no pullen; I have indeed got plenty of eggs, a couple of fine pigeons taken from the dove-house this morning, and a shoulder of red-deer, hanging up in the pantry, which Blasson, his lordship's ranger, gave me yesterday." "Enough," said my brother; and having consulted me, we agreed that some eggs and the pigeons would be sufficient for us. That point being settled, my brother enquired how far we were from Abbeville? The host informed us, at least four leagues. "Because," said my brother, "I am inclined, when the rain abates, to proceed towards that city, after having taken our supper." "By Saint Louis," cried the host, "but it shall not be with my advice! the road is very indifferent, and, besides, it is infested with freebooting-soldiers,—a murrain take them!—who rob

and plunder wherever they come; aye, and do worse things besides.—The lady, I am sure," continued he, looking at me, " will not be able to endure the fatigue, if we should leave the danger out of the bargain—but, suppose yourself there, by the truth of man, you would not find yourself better accommodated with beds, nor more convenient lodgings, than I have got at your service." While he was speaking, a tremendous clap of thunder shook the room, and we heard the rain falling in torrents from the roof of the house. These arguments were full as powerful as any that had been urged by the host to induce us to stay with him. Our assent being given, he ordered his daughter to make ready the rooms for our reception, and retired himself to provide the supper.

" Notwithstanding all the praises that our host had bestowed on his wine, we found it very indifferent; however, we made no complaint. The supper was served up; but my

mind was occupied with reflections upon the strangeness of our situation,—a situation entirely new to me, and not much less so to my brother; so that I could not eat, and half of a pigeon satisfied him. We attempted to rally each other on our want of knowing the world, as we called it, but without success: the sallies of vivacity were rather forced than natural; and, for my own part, I was infinitely more inclined to weep than to be mirthful. My brother perceived that I was greatly fatigued, and therefore insisted upon my retiring to rest; accordingly, he summoned the hostess to conduct me to the chamber prepared for me, declaring, that he would indulge himself upon the settle by the fire-side, that he might be ready, upon the approach of morning, to see that the horses were properly dressed; for his intention was to set out early in the morning. This resolution of sitting by the fire was violently opposed by the hostess, who assured him that the beds

were well aired, and as good as any in the country; and this assertion was seconded by the host, who had followed his wife into the room. The hostess then added, "If the young lady be afraid to sleep alone, my daughter shall lie in the same chamber, upon a little pallet that stands by her bed-side." This offer my brother prevailed upon me to accept of, and yielded himself to their solicitations; being assured that no care should be wanting respecting the horses, and that he should be called as early as he required in the morning: and indeed the people spoke with such apparent sincerity, that it would have been churlish to have given the denial. Having embraced my dear brother, we parted from each other; I following the daughter, and he the father, to our chambers. Though I had not a distant thought, that the host or hostess had formed any malevolent designs against us, yet I parted from Henry with the greatest reluctance; and pardon me, ladies,"

said she, while she heaved a deep sigh, and wiped away the tears that started from her eyes, "little did I think that I should never, never see my dearest Henry any more!— But I forget myself, and my feelings lead me to foretel the story of my misfortunes.—The tempest still continued—the rain beat against the casement of my chamber—and the furious gusts of wind, to which it was exposed, kept it in constant agitation. The horrors of the night added not a little to the uneasiness of my mind. The inn-keeper's daughter assisted me to undress, and, in her way, was complaisant and obliging; but she was very fearful of the thunder, and was constantly calling upon Saint Agnes, repeating her ave-maries, or uttering some ejaculations from her Primer. This circumstance indeed pleased me; and thence I formed a very favourable opinion of her piety. However, she had not long been in bed before she fell asleep, and I was not the least inclined to disturb her rest;

I only wished to participate in her repose, but I could not sleep. I heard the midnight bell of a neighbouring convent calling its inhabitants to their devotions, and I offered up my fervent prayers to Heaven for my brother's safety. Some time after, I closed my eyes in a kind of melancholy stupor, and, half asleep half awake, a thousand dreadful imaginations crowded into my mind.—My garments appeared to be besoiled with blood. I then thought that I was walking in a strange place, where a heap of dead bodies obstructed my passage. I was then labouring to ascend steep rocks and precipices without assistance, or made the spectator of pompous funerals. At last, however, my dear brother appeared to me standing by my bed-side covered with wounds, and his countenance overspread with a ghastly paleness. He reached out his hand, and laid hold of mine,—his hand was as cold as ice: he then looked wishfully at me, and, in a hollow tone of voice,

said, *Sister, remember me!* The coldness of the hand, the solemnity of the address, had such an effect upon my mind, that I started upright in the bed, confused and affrighted, to such a degree, that it was a long time before I could sufficiently recollect myself, or be convinced that these dreadful appearances were not the effects of reality. The thunder had subsided, but the wind and the rain were not the least abated: the lamp, by some means, was extinguished, and we were in total darkness. While I was sitting upright in the bed, I thought, during an interval of tempest, that I heard a confused rumbling in an adjacent chamber, and a faint cry of murder. "Oh, blessed Lady," cried I, clasping my hands together, "what horrid exclamation is that!" A sudden gust of wind at this moment shook the casement so furiously, that I expected it would have been blown in upon us. When the turbulence of the storm became less violent, I listened with the greatest atten-

tion, but did not hear the rumbling noise within any more, nor repetition of the fearful cry: I then endeavoured to persuade myself, that the whole was merely the effect of my bewildered imagination. Close by my bed-side, the inn-keeper's daughter slept soundly; not being disturbed either by my restlessness, or the violent rattling of the window. I was several times tempted to awaken her; but then again I considered that it could not answer any good purpose; and for that reason I left her to her repose. All the efforts, however, that I made to tranquillize my mind were altogether ineffectual; fresh images of terror floated before my eyes whenever I attempted to close them: I fancied that my hand, which my brother had grasped, was cold as ice; and the solemn words,—*Remember me!*—sounded in my ears like a warning voice from heaven. Oh, gracious saints and angels, what a night did I pass! and what a morning followed!"

Here she paused for a while; but having wiped her eyes, which were bathed with tears, she thus resumed her discourse:—

"Upon the first appearance of the dawn of day, I awoke my companion, and she assisted me to dress myself; and the moment I had so done, I entreated her to show me to my brother's room. While she was slipping on her juppon, I went to the casement; the storm, that had continued with such violence during the night, was passed over, and I saw the sun, without the intervention of a cloud, emerging from the horizon. I bowed my head in reverence to the Maker of that glorious luminary, and repeated a paternoster; then, turning to my companion, I entreated her not to delay: she yielded to my solicitations, and, without having laced the bosom of her kirtel, quitted the room, and bid me follow her. "But," says she, "you will disturb the young chevalier; for I dare say he is asleep." "Do not fear that," said I; "but

if it should prove so, I know that he will excuse me: but where is the door?" "Here, just before us," said she, leading me through the return of a long gallery. "Well then," said I, "rap at it gently." She then stopped short, and replied, "This is the door, lady; but it is open. Saint Genevieve protect me! the chevalier sleeps with his door open." "Is it possible!" said I. "Yes, indeed," said she, drawing back: "I beseech you, lady, go in; for I would not have him see me thus undressed for an angel of gold." My mind instantly misgave me; the terrors of the night returned; the fatal words sounded in my ears; and I trembled while I passed by her to enter the chamber; calling out at the same time, "Brother, my dear brother, where are you?" Judge then—but who can judge that has not been involved in the same deplorable circumstances?—what I felt upon seeing the bed-clothes disturbed, and cast upon the floor; but not so as a person would have left them rising

in the usual way from his rest, and my brother not there. "Surely," said I, turning to the girl, who now ventured to look in, "you have brought me to the wrong chamber." "Indeed, my lady," said she, "this is the chamber I prepared for the chevalier; and you see that some one has been in the bed." A flood of tears prevented my returning an answer; but entering the room a little further, I saw a gisarme, stained with blood, lying upon the floor, which was also covered with blood in several places. The girl perceiving that I was greatly distressed, said, in a soothing tone of voice, "I beseech you, lady, do not cry so, and take on; the chevalier has risen sooner than usual, and is only gone to see after the horses, or to refresh himself with the morning air." I then, unconscious of what I was doing, seized upon her hand, and drawing her further into the chamber, pointed to the blood upon the floor, and the blood-stained gisarme; and then clasping my hands

together, exclaimed, in bitterness of soul, "My brother, my dear brother, is surely murdered!" "Murdered!" cried the girl, and trembled while she spoke. "Saint Denis forbid!" and then, to my astonishment, started backwards, calling out with all her strength, "Thieves, thieves! My father is robbed! We are undone!" Her powerful vociferations soon raised the people of the house; and the first that came was the inn-keeper himself, half undressed, and rubbing his eyes. He hastily enquired what was the reason for this outcry. "You are robbed!" said his daughter. "Your coffer is broken open; the plate is gone; and the young chevalier is not to be found!" "By Saint Ursula," cried the host, "it is true!—The young chevalier, quotha; the young rogue, vagabond, knave.—Oh, I am ruined, I am undone! All my money, all my plate!"—I now perceived a broken cabinet at one corner of the room, and the drawers that belonged to it were thrown out upon

each other: this I considered only as a concerted trick, to conceal the murder of my brother, and throw the suspicion of the robbery on him. Blessed Virgin, how can I describe what I felt at this dreadful moment! words have not weight sufficient for the purpose.—I thought I should have sunk into the earth, when I was addressed with all the insolence that low minds could dictate, and at the same time found myself entirely in the power of those who so cruelly insulted me. To remonstrate was in vain; and at last I assumed sufficient courage to say, "Why do you use such unbecoming language to me, you who have murdered my brother? I beseech you, therefore, to be merciful, and kill me also." "We murdered your brother!" retorted the inn-keeper; "no, no, we be no murderers; we be as honest, ay, by my troth, and honester too, than many that wear surcoats of cendal, and mantles lined with minever." Mrs Horteps came into the chamber

soon afterwards, and joined in the accusations; and her reproaches seemed more bitter, because they came from one of my own sex. In short, I became the ridicule of the menial servants, and I know not what gibes and calumnies were not cast upon me. The hostler was sent to see if the horses were in the stable: mine, it seems, was there, but not my brother's; and this circumstance they declared to be a full proof of his being guilty of the robbery. I was considered as his accomplice: their contemptuous speeches were now multiplied, embittered with such cruel tauntings as were quite outrageous to the ears of delicacy, besides the addition of many bitter oaths, that made me shudder. An officer of justice was then sent for, and the innkeeper swore by his Maker, that since one bird was flown, the other should be mewed in the cage; "We shall then see," quoth he, "how finely silks and sarsenets will shine in a prison." The mention of the word prison,

added to the horrors that already possessed my mind, were too much for it to bear: I fell upon the floor, it seems, deprived of my senses; for I trust to relation only for what became of me until I recovered my senses.

"I well remember, when the return of reason gave me the power to discriminate the objects around me, I found myself in bed in a dark low room, and an elderly woman was sitting by my side, who I judged to be a votary to some religious order, by her dress, and by the large rosary that I saw depending from her girdle. A table was placed at the foot of the bed, upon which there stood several small vessels, such as are used for the purpose of medicine: all was quite strange to me. I looked round with much surprize, and at last, addressing myself to the lady, I begged her to inform me where I was? "You are," said she, "under the protection of the convent of ******. It is now twelve hours and upwards since you was brought hither."

"And where is my brother?" said I, anxiously. Instead of answering my question, she turned towards the door, and ringing a little bell, another nun presently appeared, to whom she thus addressed herself: "Sister Agnes, the lady is now awake, and sensible; bring the cordial." She disappeared for a moment, and returned with a small cup in her hand, which she instructed me to take. "My dear lady, you have been dangerously ill; I am happy to see that your indisposition is taking such a favourable turn: convalescence will now much depend upon your own conduct. But you must endeavour to compose yourself; the physician, who has attended upon you, strictly forbids your talking. The paroxysms of a violent fever, under which you laboured, are for the present indeed in some degree subsided, but they are not subdued; and the least violence of exertion may occasion a relapse." "Alas!" answered I, grasping her hand, and pressing it to my

lips, "say but my brother lives. Oh no!—You turn away from me;—then all my fears are realized." "Be pacified," said she, elevating her voice; "you shall know all in proper time:—take this composing draught. Hope for the best; and give not way to those black melancholy thoughts that pervade your imagination, and obscure the prospect of comfort presented by reason." I blessed her for the ground she gave me to hope that my sorrows might terminate more happily than I expected. I took the medicine, which had the effect it was designed to produce; for I closed my eyes, and presently fell asleep. For a day or two my enquiries were prevented in the same manner as before: rest and quiet were said to be absolutely necessary for my recovery. But when the symptoms of my fever had left me, and it was judged fit for me to know the extent of my misfortunes, Sister Agnes came to my bed-side, and entered into conversation more familiarly with

me than she had hitherto done; and in a tender and delicate manner, informed me, by degrees, of all that had happened."

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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